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THE NEW REPUBLIC

THE FIFTIES

WHOSE ARE THEY NOW?

by Frank Rich

Republican Party Reptiles ..... *Michael Lewis*
Can Susan Sontag Write? ..... *Richard Jenkyns*
Water for Peace .... *Irwin Ploss and Jonathan Rubinstein*
Men vs. Poetry ..... *April Bernard*
Among the Hezbollah ..... *Geraldine Brooks*
elebrity? by Jim Holt

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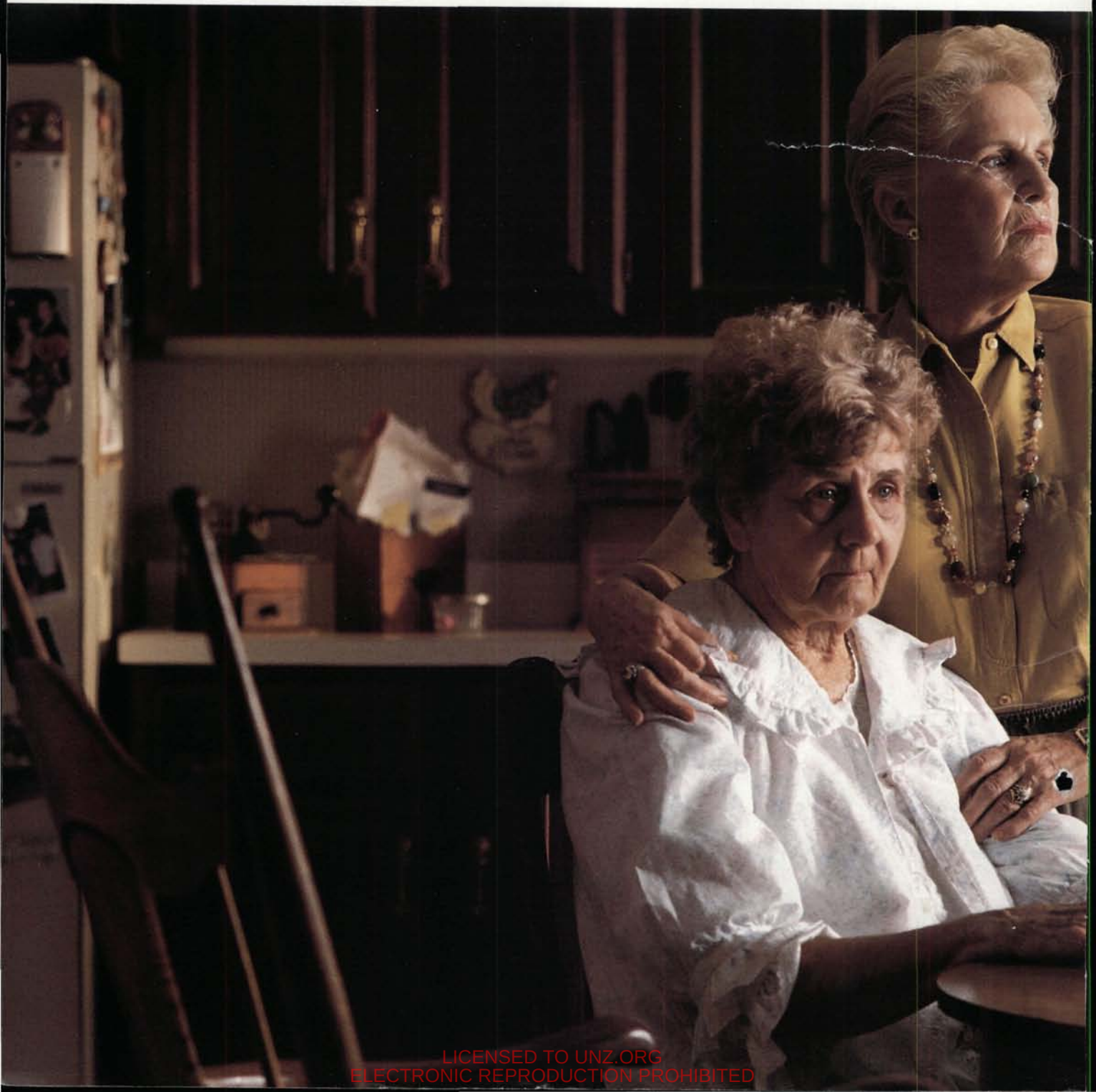

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ne disease that their minds?

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CORRESPONDENCE

Character studies

To the editors:

Martha Nussbaum distorts the truth on behalf of her close friend David M. Halperin in her characterization of Professor Cynthia Griffin Wolff's lawsuit against MIT ("The Softness of Reason," July 13 & 20). Nussbaum portrays Wolff as an Aristophanic "conservative" who opposes "the efforts of some of her colleagues to diversify the curriculum by adding material dealing with women and gays to the existing core." But Wolff, an eminent scholar of Emily Dickinson and Edith Wharton, does not oppose such efforts. Indeed, Wolff's lawsuit documents her repeated attempts to contribute to the Women's Studies Program at MIT and the hostile opposition to her, spearheaded by Halperin and his associates.

Worse, Nussbaum claims that Halperin has never been the subject of a formal harassment complaint. But *Counterpoint,* an independent student magazine at MIT, conducted its own investigation into Wolff's allegations and found that an untenured professor in the Literature Faculty at MIT filed formal, written sexual harassment charges against Halperin in 1991. Nussbaum's article is only one of a series of attempts by Halperin's allies within and without the MIT administration to suppress the charge or deny its existence. Nevertheless, in the past year MIT Provost Mark Wrighton convened a committee to investigate the charge. The committee found in favor of the untenured professor, and Provost Wrighton concurred.

AVIK S. ROY
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Martha Nussbaum replies:

Mr. Roy is in error on both points. Concerning Women's Studies, the Wolff lawsuit (which I have read) makes *claims* about her alleged attempts to offer a course in the Women's Studies program, but it does not "document" these claims. The claims are contradicted both by Professor Ruth Perry, director of Women's Studies at MIT, and by members of the Women's Studies Curriculum Committee, who agree that Wolff never submitted a course proposal to the program. The lawsuit also has the peculiarity of blaming the alleged exclusion on Perry, although she is not a member of the curriculum committee.

Concerning Halperin, the facts are as follows. (And Halperin is by no means my only source.) When Halperin himself was up for tenure several years ago, Wolff warned him that a senior member of the Literature Faculty, a gay man, was planning to vote against him. Wolff urged Halperin to bring a complaint of sexual harassment against this man in order to sideline him. Halperin refused, on the grounds that no harassment had occurred. The chair then investigated the matter and found that Wolff's claims about the opposition to Halperin's tenure were false. The case sailed through. Several years later a remarkably similar incident occurred. An assistant professor, about to be considered for tenure (and described in the Wolff lawsuit as Wolff's "mentee"), wrote a personal letter to Halperin (which he may have shown to others as well), making various complaints against him. None of these was a charge that Halperin had tried to have sex with him, or had threatened him in any way. The complaints concerned conversations—at which third parties were present—in which Halperin's allusions to sexual matters were interpreted by the assistant professor as referring to him, and allegedly had the effect of making him uncomfortable. A typical example: at a departmental lunch, members of the Literature Faculty were discussing the policy of assigning personal journals to undergraduates in writing courses. Halperin, addressing the group as a whole, opined that this practice was morally dubious, in that it contained a "prurient element." This then became the charge that Halperin said that the assistant professor's teaching was prurient. Not surprisingly, such vague charges were never turned into a formal complaint of sexual harassment. But Halperin, a punctilious man, withdrew from all participation in the tenure case, feeling that it was best to avoid even the appearance of any impropriety, and also to spare the assistant professor any more discomfort. Halperin was on leave in California during the tenure procedure, and did not participate in it in any way.

Because the assistant professor, though supported for tenure by a split vote of the department, was turned down by a higher faculty committee, he brought a formal complaint about the conduct of the proceedings, alleging that they had taken place in an atmosphere of hostility in which his case could not get a fair hearing—alluding, presumably, to the factional divisions in the Literature program that are the main topic of the Wolff lawsuit. The provost named a committee to investigate *that* charge, not the earlier informal charges against Halperin. After an investigation, whose proceedings have until now been kept altogether secret, the committee found in the assistant professor's favor and gave him an extension of time. The grounds for the finding are unknown, to Roy, to me, and to everyone but the committee members. Halperin was asked whether he wished to testify before the committee; he replied that he thought it would be improper, since he had withdrawn himself from the tenure case, but wished to testify should any charges be made against him personally. He was never called to testify. Thus it seems reasonable to infer that their deliberations did not go into any allegations of harassment against Halperin, and that the members based their judgment on the general climate that existed in the program at a time when Halperin was not even there. Roy has thus conflated two issues: the informal letter, never filed as a charge, and the formal charge pertaining to the tenure case, which could not in any way pertain to Halperin.

Halperin is a distinguished scholar. His work on Greek homosexuality has received highly favorably reviews in the two leading journals of his profession: in the *Classical Review* from Sir Kenneth Dover, and in *Classical Philology* from David Cohen of Berkeley. Wolff's attempt to portray him as an extremist who wants to lower standards of scholarship is thus extremely peculiar. And Halperin's only "offense" is to be a publicly gay man and to direct a lesbian and gay studies program.

Avik Roy has made no effort to speak with me or to ask me about my evidence, my views, or my motives, yet he feels free to allege not only that I am in error about the facts, but also that I have engaged in willful distortion of the truth for the sake of a friend. The former claim is simply mistaken; the latter is an unwarranted slur against my professional and personal character. That Roy feels free to indulge in such slurs without any evidence should help readers assess the rest of his narrative.

Chest protector

To the editors:

Stanley Kauffmann's review of *A League of Their Own* (August 3) does not necessarily hold in question his judgment as a film critic, but it does say a lot about him as an observer of baseball.

In the first place, his claim that the major leagues were not diminished during World War II is absurd. Unless, of course, one is prepared to argue that the dynamic of the game was un-

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changed by the absence of Ted Williams, Joe DiMaggio, Bob Feler, Hank Greenberg, etc.

Secondly, what does Kauffmann mean that the women in the film did not wear "chest protectors" for the purpose of sliding headfirst? Has any runner in the history of the game worn a chest protector to slide with? I don't think so. Sliding pants, yes, but a chest protector, nope. Besides, in those days no one ever slid headfirst to begin with; that is a more recent—and dangerous—idea.

Third, as ballplayers the women in the film weren't that bad. They could throw, field, catch, and hit OK. In that judgment Kauffmann may have revealed more of his chauvinism than he intended.

Having played a lot of baseball in my life, and having watched it and thought about it more than I care to admit, I thought *A League of Their Own* credible. And if there was, here and there, a slight glitch, so what? The film was wonderfully entertaining and a welcomed exception to much of the garbage Hollywood throws at the American public.

GEORGE MITROVICH
San Diego, California

Czarismo

To the editors:

Michael Kinsley was incorrect in his comment that the position of drug "czar" was a George Bush creation (TRB, July 27). This post was the result of congressional action. Democrats, Republicans, liberals, moderates, conservatives, blacks, and whites acted together, against the wishes of the Reagan administration. Like the rest of the drug war, the drug "czar" uses taxpayers' money to try to satisfy all ideologies. He helps to fund cops, prosecutors, military personnel, social workers, public defenders, educators, researchers, and bureaucrats. No matter who is elected president, look for an AIDS "czar" to be appointed next year, to continue the fight for employment of the upper middle class.

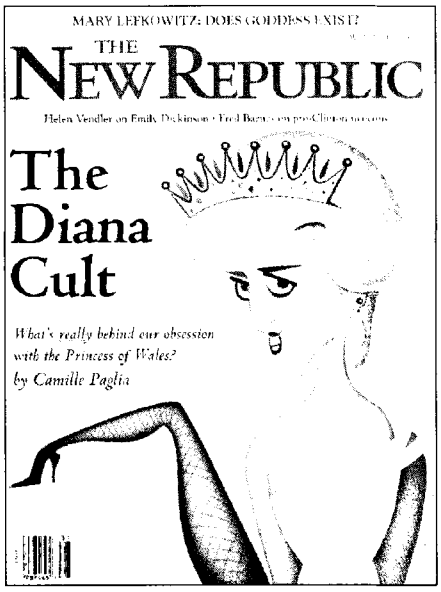
JERRY SKURNIK
New York, New York

Dating Dickinson

To the editors:

As author of *The Language of Exclusion: The Poetry of Emily Dickinson and Christina Rossetti* (with Andrea Abbott), I disagree with Helen Vendler in "The Unsociable Soul" (August 3) that Dickinson's greatest poetry does not require historical contextualization. Indeed, the initial poem Vendler focuses upon, "Behind Me—dips Eternity—," benefits from historical interpretation.

Details in this 1863 poem suggest that Dickinson hopes spiritually but also politically for peace, for a "Dateless Dynasty"—a firm, indissoluble state—to quiet the "Maelstrom" that was the Civil War ("With Midnight to the North . . . / And Midnight to the South"). When she describes "Death" as "the drift of Eastern Gray," it is also likely that she has in mind the debris of soldiers' corpses left by the sweep of Confederate forces. She laments that such destruction is endured before the fate of the western states can be resolved ("Before the West begin—").


MARY LEFKOWITZ: DOES GODDESS EXIST?
THE
NEW REPUBLIC
The Diana Cult
What's really behind our obsession with the Princess of Wales?
by Camille Paglia

The Civil War permeated Dickinson's consciousness, not only because she lived in a politician's house (her father's) and read *The Springfield Republican* daily, but also because her brother Austin paid a substitute to fight for him, while he spent the war at home. Her more direct treatments of the conflict appear in poems #444, #596, and #639 (Thomas H. Johnson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*).

Dickinson's spiritual concerns in this poem are not divorced from her distress over her nation at war. Is art ever produced in a vacuum?

SHARON LEDER
Poughkeepsie, New York

Sloppy

To the editors:

Although I do not disagree with Hendrik Hertzberg's point, I must take exception to his sloppy journalism in his New York Diarist ("Speeding Ticket," August 10). He mentions Jimmy Carter as the first presidential nominee from the "Old Confederacy," neglecting the fact that Woodrow Wilson was born in Virginia and raised in Georgia. Notwithstanding his decade in New Jersey at Princeton and the Governor's Mansion, he was born and bred a Southerner. And I might add that Texas, very much a part of the Confederacy, spawned both Dwight Eisenhower and Lyndon Johnson.

Moreover, Hertzberg writes of JFK's retarded sister "Kathleen." In fact, Kathleen, with all of her faculties intact, was killed in a tragic plane crash after World War II. He should have given the name of Rosemary.

LENARD E. DAVIS
Newport Beach, California

Out of bounds

To the editors:

Your August 10 Notebook item on Thomas L. Friedman is really beyond the bounds. If you are trying to say that Friedman is some obedient reporter from the court of James Baker, you have the wrong man and the wrong craft. This is not Thomas Friedman, nor is this his kind of work. The reporter you snidely describe as "the *New York Times* State Department spokesman" is one of the most gifted and independent-minded reporters of his generation. You pick on a small item he did, "Shalom Y'all (But Baker won't say it)." You read into an amusing vignette all kinds of unwarranted assumptions. Why not cite all his other work, his serious dispatches that bear witness to his great energy and to the integrity of his craft?

FOUAD AJAMI
New York, New York

What the butler saw

To the editors:

It is thrilling indeed to see in Correspondence (August 10) that Edna Welthorpe is alive and well and living in Los Angeles. Her fulminations certainly prick up our ears. Joe Orton lives!

KATHARINE WEBER
Bethany, Connecticut

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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FROM WASHINGTON

The case for Bush

Have you seen the Timex ad featuring a photo of a watch between the teeth of a dog named Mugsy? "Mugsy," the ad explains, "was pronounced dead after being hit by a car and was buried by his family in a three-foot grave in their yard. The next morning they found Mugsy, with dirty nose and wagging tail, scratching at the back door."

To some, no doubt, the story of Mugsy's shocking ordeal will be a compelling reason to buy a Timex watch. Others may reflect bitterly that Mugsy's family is now profiting from its own stupidity in burying a live dog by selling his mug for commercial purposes. For most of us, though, the saga of Mugsy naturally will lead the mind to dwell, not on watches, but on George Bush. Has he, too, been buried prematurely? Has nobody noticed that he is still breathing? Will he emerge in November, with dirty nose and wagging tail, the keys to the White House dangling from his teeth?

On the principle that you can judge a man by the enemies he makes, I am impressed by the hatred of many conservatives for President Bush. Is it possible that I have misjudged him? These conservatives suffer from the basic delusion that Bush is a betrayer of Reaganism. They believe that none of what's gone wrong on Bush's watch would have happened if Saint Ronald were still in command. Of course that's absurd. Bush is the inheritor of Reaganism. Reagan played credit card politics and Bush is stuck with the bills. Bush didn't betray Reagan: Reagan betrayed Bush.

Nevertheless, if the bug-eyed right-wing zealots have abandoned the Republican incumbent, maybe there's some merit in him that has escaped me. At any rate, it's a useful exercise to think of a case for re-electing George Bush. Last week's exercise in these pages, also called "The Case for Bush," evoked feelings more of pity than of admiration. Is that the best we can do for the old fellow? Surely not. So let's try again.

Hmmm . . .

Well, he did an excellent job superintending the reunification of Germany. I think we can all agree about that.

Anything else?

[Break for lunch.]

OK, how about this?

Now that Ross Perot has peered into the abyss and slunk away, no presidential candidate is addressing seriously the greatest threat to this country's future prosperity and security, which is the swelling national debt. Bill Clinton's economic program promises a deficit of $141 billion after four years. Bush's most recent budget promises $188 billion after five. Neither plan is especially honest in its calculations. Both gentlemen canoodle with good old Ms. Rosy Scenario. Both avoid asking the great middle class to take a hit, either in taxes or in benefits, though both must know that no real solution is possible without that.

Clinton's plan is better, and not just because his number is lower. Clinton at least addresses the social deficit with proposals for useful government investment. Bush pencils in four more years of decaying highways, declining health care, eroding job skills, and still ends up with a larger dollar deficit than Clinton. Nevertheless, neither Bush nor Clinton truly grasps the nettle.

So. If you think that both candidates are ducking the most important challenge facing the next president, you must ask yourself: Which of the two is more likely, once elected, to deal with it anyway? To put it grandly, which one might rise above politics to reach statesmanship? To put it crudely, which one might break his promises and betray the voters for their own good? A strong case can be made: that man is George Bush.

A President Clinton will have to be thinking about re-election. We can see at the moment what a devastating effect this can have on an incumbent's integrity and political courage. A re-elected President Bush, by contrast, will be a lame duck. His career will be over. A man who's been seeking public office his whole life without ever knowing what for will have to face up to that question at last.

Maybe he'll come down with a case of History. Maybe, after a lifetime spent sucking up to anyone in his path and flitting from one principle to the next, he'll feel some hitherto undiscovered reservoir of flinty WASP integrity come gushing forth from deep within his gene pool. Maybe he'll think, "Golly, I can't leave the country in this mess."

Ronald Reagan hoarded his political popularity chips until the end, even though he had no use for them after 1984. Reagan could have done things in his second term that would have made George Bush's burden a lot lighter. If Bush squeaks through to re-election, maybe he will do for his successor what Ronald Reagan never did for him. Maybe he will spend his chips. After all, you can't take them with you.

Keep in mind that George Bush is a proven betrayer of his campaign promises. In fact, that is of all things what his presidency his best known for by the electorate (though I doubt that one voter in a thousand could tell you what taxes Bush actually raised in 1990). He did it before. Maybe he'll do it again.

And then there's the partisan Democratic case for a Bush victory. As a Democrat, desperately hoping for Clinton to win, one can't shake the panicky thought, "Uh oh, what if he does win? What then?" Then the Democrats will be stuck with the deficit hot potato and the Republicans can sit back and laugh. Clinton will inherit the problem with no mandate to do anything serious about it. And, unlike Bush, he won't have the convenient excuse of a Congress controlled by the opposition party.

In 1988 several leading Democrats declined to run for president on the theory that 1989-93, with the due bills from Reaganism coming in, might be a good four years to be out of office. Let the Republicans clean up their own mess. If Bush loses, events will have confirmed the wisdom of that theory. But since Bush has manifestly failed to clean up the mess, 1993-97 might also be a good time to be out of office.

If Bush were to use his second term to deal honestly with the deficit mess, this might be so unpopular that the Republican candidate would surely lose in 1996. A Democrat could then run an honest campaign and, once elected, govern without this terrible albatross. If, instead, Bush allowed the problem to fester for four more years, it would become harder than ever to blame the nation's woes on Jimmy Carter. By that point, the cost of fiscal negligence might be so evident that a Democrat could do what Ross Perot didn't dare this time: run and win by asking for a mandate to do the right things.

So maybe, for the good of the country and even for the good of the Democratic Party, it would be better if George Bush defeats Bill Clinton this fall.

[Break for cocktails.]

Nawwwwww.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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A Weekly Journal of Opinion

SEPTEMBER 7 & 14, 1992

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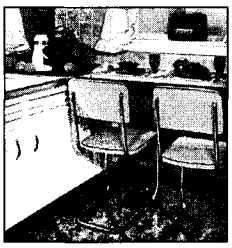

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100 Years After the Homestead Lockout

BY ALBERT SHANKER, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

One hundred years ago this June, Andrew Carnegie had the workers locked out of his steel plant in Homestead, Pennsylvania. Carnegie wanted to run his mill without unionized employees, and there were no laws protecting workers against being fired simply because they belonged to a union. So Carnegie's deputy, Henry Clay Frick, shut the door against the 3,800 Homestead workers and tried to bring in replacements to operate the mill. The result was a bloody confrontation in which men on both sides were killed. But Carnegie got what he wanted—he broke the union—and it was a number of years before this country got labor laws that confirmed the workers' right to join together in unions without fear of losing their jobs.

People commemorated the Homestead lockout this year as a milestone in labor history, just as they commemorated the eightieth anniversary of the Triangle Shirt Waist fire a couple of years ago. In the Triangle tragedy, 150 workers lost their lives when a fire raced through their factory and they were unable to escape because the factory owners had locked the exits from the outside.

When we remember terrible events like these, we have a comfortable feeling that we have come very far since those days. Some people feel so comfortable that they think we don't need unions anymore; excellent labor laws and responsible employers have made them unnecessary. But we haven't come as far as we'd like to think.

Businesses are turning their employees into third-world workers. Is this what we want for the future of our country?

Look at the striker replacement bill, which has been hanging around Congress for a couple of years. This bill would close up a loophole in current law which says that, while management may not fire striking workers, it's OK to hire permanent replacements for them. What's the difference? President Bush claims that he sees one, and he promises to veto the bill if Congress finally gets around to passing it. But this is a distinction without a difference to people who could lose their jobs. What it really amounts to is denying workers the right to strike: Few will walk off the job, no matter how they are treated, if management is free to give their jobs to other workers.

Something like that happened during this year's strike at Caterpillar, Inc. Over 12,000 union members were forced to go back to work and unilaterally accept management's demands because of management's threat to hire permanent replacements. This kind of pressure could not be put on union members in any other industrialized country.

And if the events at the Imperial chicken-processing plant in Hamlet, North Carolina, don't remind us of the Triangle fire, they should. In September 1991, when a fire swept through the Imperial plant, 30 of the 90 workers in the plant died, some of them piled up at unmarked exits that were locked—from the outside. These workers were supposedly protected by occupational health and safety legislation, but laws are no better than their enforcement and the Imperial plant had never been inspected. Of course the workers could have demanded the protection they were entitled to under the law. But just ask yourself how likely poor people would be to risk a job they couldn't afford to lose by lodging a complaint against an employer. These people needed a union, but North Carolina is a state whose right-to-work laws discourage unionization so they didn't have one.

The global economy is putting new and even more terrible pressures on American workers. Some of them are apparent in a story about the Monroe Manufacturing Corp. in Monroe, Louisiana, that appeared in a recent *Wall Street Journal* (July 28, 1992). Most of the workers in the Monroe factory, which makes items for babies like bibs and pacifiers, get $4.25 an hour, the minimum wage. This means that many live below the poverty line and collect food stamps even when they work a six-day week. The company provides no health insurance, and according to the *Journal*, working conditions are horrible. Workers tell of 100-degree temperatures and overflowing toilets, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration has cited the company for "toxic fumes, poor ventilation, fire hazards, unsafe machinery and overcrowding."

Why aren't the workers unionized? There have been a number of attempts over the years, but the owner has threatened to move his plant to some third-world country if his workers organize and he is forced to give them a wage comparable to that of other unionized workers in the industry. So what can they do? "It's so awful there," one of them said, "and I do so want my life to get better. But, God, I can't lose this job."

It's probably a measure of how dreadful conditions are that Monroe workers recently voted to take their chances on unionizing. Will the owner move the factory to Mexico or China? He probably won't have to because, if he takes advantage of present regulations, he could delay collective bargaining for years. "I think the record is seven years," he says. And if he keeps the heat on his workers, he might get them to vote out the union before he has to bargain a contract.

Monroe's owner is frank about what he is doing—running a third-world operation in the U.S. The shame is that our laws allow him to get away with it and that they penalize poor people who want a living wage and decent working conditions.

The union movement took a lot of workers who were relatively unskilled and turned them into middle-class people who educated their children and supported the U.S. economy. Now, we've got businesses turning their employees into third-world workers. Is this what we want for the future of our country?

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

SEPTEMBER 7 & 14, 1992

THE BAKER STRATEGY

Upon his move from the State Department to the White House, James Baker declared to the assembled journalists the rationale for four more years of Bush-Baker. It was the same message that propelled what momentum there was to the Republican convention in Houston. The idea is that Bush and Baker would now do for America what they have already done for the world. We wonder if America can survive it.

The truth is that George Bush's foreign policy has been a perfect reflection of his domestic policy. In spirit, Baker never left the White House. He ran the State Department just as he ran the Treasury; and he will run the campaign just as he ran State. He even employs the same tiny cadre of people—Margaret Tutwiler, Dennis Ross, Robert Zoellick—for all his portfolios. Baker does not carry around with him any vision or expertise in any particular area. He carries around a capacity for management: primarily of the press, and secondly of the bureaucracy. A second Bush term with Baker installed in the White House is not, then, a sign that it will be markedly different from the first. It is a sign that it will be *exactly the same.*

Baker's skills are those of a pragmatist with a strong distaste for ideology, very much like the president himself. His instinct is to avoid confrontation, stick with old friends, shun risk. These are excellent traits when it is clear what has to be done, when all that is needed is management of the details. But abroad, over the last few years, that has not been the case, which is why the Bush-Baker foreign policy has been such a failure. And domestically over the next four years, mere management will be tantamount to management of decline.

Just as Bush could not get by as a caretaker of the Reagan revolution, Baker's tactical finesse has been no substitute for fresh insight in a world in which familiar landmarks have been swept away. Here was an Old World navigator in the uncharted seas of New World disorder. Too much information might dispel the chimera of stability he cherished. So he insulated himself from the rich flow of facts and policy recommendations disseminated by the department he headed. When he left Foggy Bottom, it was with a tearful farewell to employees of whose existence he had barely been aware.

The result was a series of misjudgments. The Republican conventioneers insist that Bush won the cold war. But of course, it was Reagan who waged the cold war to its end. Bush resisted the victory, and won it by default. The unraveling of the Soviet Union and Gorbachev's descent into political impotence eluded Baker. The invasion of Kuwait was in part the result of a disastrous miscalculation on the part of American diplomacy; Saddam was not only appeased but actively courted, and not only through economic aid but by turning a blind eye to his growing nuclear arsenal. In the most dangerous blunder of all, American diplomats gave the impression that the threats to Kuwait were of little concern to the United States. After the war's end Baker acquiesced in the betrayal of the Kurds and Shiites—lest Iraq succumb to instability. In June 1991, on the brink of Balkan collapse, he was still assuring Slobodan Milosevic of American interest in the "territorial integrity" of Yugoslavia. In China, as with South Africa, quiet diplomacy would do the trick.

Then there were the omissions. The obsession with the Arab-Israeli conflict—or, more precisely, the obsession with Israel, a country Baker does not like—was complemented by the almost total neglect of Asian affairs. The integration of economic policy and diplomacy was scarcely attempted. The transformation of last year's Japan trip into a crusade for "jobs, jobs, jobs" was a symptom of a policy barely conceived. In its high-handed summitry and coziness with the diplomatic elite, this internationalist administration ironically fueled isolationism.

James Baker has mysteriously managed to skirt responsibility for a number of troubles he has helped to create. Now almost forgotten is his murky role in the theft of Carter's briefing books for the 1980 debate with Reagan. At Treasury, where he was in charge of renegotiating the Third World debt crisis, he failed to disclose his multimillion-dollar block of stocks in Chemical Bank of New York, which had lent $4.5 billion to Third World nations. Even more than Bush, he was an architect of Reaganomics, and he also failed to heed the warnings of regulators long after the severity of the S&L crisis was clear.

As we write, we have not heard George Bush's acceptance speech in Houston. Perhaps Baker will have worked some magic and retrieved Bush's sagging poll numbers by infusing him with a sense of purpose. We doubt it. The production values will doubtless improve; the glitches dwindle; the gaffes decline. Poor Dan Quayle will be relegated to small speeches in smaller media markets. But what Baker cannot do, because he is Baker, is create a new reason for re-electing George Bush. Baker's new power, his centrality to a second Bush term, is the clearest indication that, under the illusion of going forward, we are in effect going back. •

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NOTEBOOK

BUSHISM OF THE WEEK: "... But that I'm out of touch with the American people, that I don't know people are hurting. I know it. I feel it. We pray about it, and I mean that literally at night, and, oh, many other things, the various—where I don't care about—don't know about education or don't—I mean, we've got a sound approach, innovative, revolutionary approach, and so I've got to make that clear." —in an interview with David Brinkley, August 16

CLINTON SUCK-UP WATCH: "Somewhere in the Iowa night—that night, the first of their second bus tour—Clinton and Gore had, once again, transcended the traditional rites and clichés of politics. There had been doubts all day: it would be impossible to replicate the magic of their first trip, the post-convention exhilaration, the crowds lining the highway, filling the town squares along the Ohio River valley. And it was true, the crowds this time wouldn't be quite so large or enthusiastic, the candidates wouldn't be quite so eloquent—but something *was* happening out there on Highway 61, an emotional connection that mocked the industrial-strength cynicism of the 150 journalists tagging along." —Joe Klein, *Newsweek*, August 17

HELLO... I'M BARBARA BUSH.
I DON'T HOLD ELECTIVE OFFICE...
I DON'T MAKE ANY OF THE PRESIDENT'S DECISIONS...
AND NEITHER DO I HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF THOSE DECISIONS.
I COME HERE TO SPEAK TO YOU TONIGHT...
SO WHY AM I HERE SPEAKING TONIGHT, GEORGE?
"FAMILY VALUE."
YOU'RE THE ONLY MEMBER OF MINE WHO STILL HAS ANY
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VANITY OF THE BONFIRES: Tina Brown's farewell issue of *Vanity Fair* was a disgrace, thanks to Stephen Schiff's lengthy valentine to Leni Riefenstahl, Hitler's filmmaker. The article accepts Riefenstahl's absurd protestations about her ignorance of the atrocities of the Third Reich. She complained about the treatment of Polish prisoners of war, she tells Schiff, and complained to Hitler himself about his anti-Semitism. Visiting the United States in 1938, she told reporters, "apparently in good faith," according to Schiff, that the news about Kristallnacht was all lies. The article's sycophancy exceeds even *Vanity Fair*'s usual standard. ("I tell her that *Triumph of the Will* reminds me of a ritual, with the god Hitler descending from the clouds and the light forming halos around his head, and she bursts into laughter. 'Really!' she says. 'I never thought of this. I never for one minute had the idea to make Hitler big or great, not a little bit.'") Schiff says *Triumph of the Will*, which he calls a "masterpiece," is pure form with no ideological content, and thus Riefenstahl defied the Nazi party. Schiff then goes on to make Hitler out as a sort of enlightened neoliberal. The führer, he notes, "revolutionized the German highway system, launched innovative anti-pollution measures, improved the country's working conditions, initiated a Utopian city-planning program, raised health standards, reduced infant mortality, chipped away at German class barriers, and rejuvenated the economy." Memo to Graydon Carter: begin de-Nazification immediately.

VALUE-FREE: Among the ritual fear and loathing of homosexuals expressed at the Republican convention, it's ironic that the platform should have singled out gay marriage as the ultimate bugbear. Marriage, one might have thought, is a quintessential "family value." It fosters stability, commitment, fidelity, and restraint. If it does not qualify as a conservative institution, then it is hard to know what does. In their ferocious opposition to gay marriage, the Republicans confirm what has long been suspected. "Family" is an icon not for the virtues it implies, but for the people it excludes.

FICTIONARY: In the third edition of the American Heritage Dictionary, which has just been published, there appears this masterpiece of a definition: "Hussein ... Born 1935. King of Jordan (since 1952). Since he lost control of western Jordan in the Arab-Israeli War (1967), Hussein has attempted to remain neutral in Arab-Israeli conflicts."

BREAK POINT: This is our last combined issue of the summer. The editors will be recovering from the Republican convention. •

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New York's frenzy of renown.

CELEB CITY

By Jim Holt

If one cannot be a celebrity oneself—and frequently one cannot—the next best thing is to live in their midst. For it is well-known that, under the right circumstances, ordinary human beings can draw ontological power from being in daily proximity to celebrities. "It is as if, because they are the subjects of so much public attention, when they take cognizance of us, all that attention for a moment gets turned upon us, reflected toward us," writes the Harvard philosopher Robert Nozick, who I believe was the first to discover and elucidate the exact process by which this occurs.

For those intent on serious ontological parasitism, New York City is the only place to be. What about Los Angeles, you demur. Isn't that the real home of "the stars"? Well, perhaps, but this cuts no ontological ice, owing to what is known as the wave-particle duality of celebrities. Qua *Homo sapiens*, celebrities have a particulate nature, obeying the laws of Newtonian physics like the rest of us. Qua celebrities, however, they are manifest as waves in an ethereal medium of gossip. Waves of a very similar character—Cher and Barbra Streisand, say, or Arnold Schwarzenegger and Kevin Costner—tend to be mutually canceling. (During the years when Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo both lived in New York, this process was so complete that a negative energy chasm opened up, obliging Dietrich, the lesser of the two, to quit the city for Paris.) Very dissimilar celebrity waves—Fran Leibowitz and Donald Trump, for instance, or John Gotti and Tina Brown—are mutually reinforcing, yielding an ontological plenitude for non-entities to batten off.

So you see, Manhattan is the only place to be. Not only is every celebrity-engendering elite represented here—the media, crime, art, Condé Nast, literature, business, old money, new money, politics, café society, bohemia, fashion, pop music—but such is the quotidian propinquity of stars to the ruck of humanity than one actually gets, willy nilly, to rub right up against them. One can even mess them about a bit if one is so inclined—as Dan Rather can unhappily testify—or pose them seemingly misaddressed and unintelligible queries—such as, to advert to the previous instance, "What is the frequency, Kenneth?"

In fact, celebrities here are well-nigh inescapable. I have seen Mick Jagger in the local greengrocer as well as at Mr. Chow. Richard Nixon's daily constitutional used to take him right past my bedroom window every morning back in the days when he and Pat were living in an east-60s townhouse (next door to David Rockefeller and sharing a backyard fence with, of all people, Arthur Schlesinger Jr.). I have been brushed by Raquel Welch at Studio 54, where I also briefly entertained the illusion that I was dancing with Mary Tyler Moore, until I noticed her real partner was Dick Cavett. I once went out to buy beer at a bodega in a slummy part of upper Manhattan in the middle of the night only to find Dan Ackroyd and Bill Murray there doing the same. Who was that eating breakfast in the greasy spoon on the first floor of my tenement walk-up? Pedro Almodóvar and David Leavitt, with Tim Robbins in the booth. Paul Schaffer, Christopher Reeves, and Sandra Bernhardt—not to mention (because I do not know his name) a fellow who is the spitting image of Henry Kissinger—are virtually my doppelgängers. Could it be—sightings of Alger Hiss, Bernhard Goetz ("Gotta dime, Bernie?"), and Elie Wiesel *in a single day*? Jackie O, Walter Cronkite, Lauren Bacall, and S. I. Newhouse absolutely pullulate at book parties. Crossing Seventh Avenue the other morning in a slight daze, I peripherally noted an unmistakable white streak in an otherwise raven head of hair passing by. *Susan Sontag!!* I thought as I swiveled my head a bit sharpish to catch a glimpse, pulling a neck muscle in the process. A friend suggested I sue her for whiplash. But I do not think I will; after all, my near brush with her put oomph in my morning and bucked me up ontologically for the entire day.

Such is the abundance and availability of celebrities in New York that for the most part they are treated *exactly the same as ordinary citizens*, which makes for a sort of egalitarian redistribution of ontic worth. I first realized this when, in a SoHo restaurant a couple of years ago, a nobody-friend and I were given a table at the front ahead of Michael J. Fox, who was then subjected to the indignity of having to stand waiting with his entourage for a good quarter hour. "How's the food, fellas?" he said on approaching our table during the interval. I cringed with embarrassment at the glaring injustice of being seated while a great (albeit tiny) star was left standing, but Fox seemed to think nothing of it. To make matters worse, Paul Simon showed up a little while later and was actually turned away. *Throw me out instead!* I briefly thought of imploring the maitre d', then decided against it. (Many years ago, I am told, Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands was asked to hurry up with her meal in a Manhattan restaurant so that a private party could begin for an obscure artist by the name of Appel. "You're tossing out an Orange for an Apple?" she responded, alluding to her dynastic house.)

Nothing compares to the spirit of equality between celebrities and nobodies that prevails at my local food market, a legendary Greenwich Village place called Balducci's. A battalion of luminaries regularly gives custom there: the recently deceased aleatory composer John Cage, the dotty radical lawyer William Kunstler (more famous than ever after playing himself in the movie *The*

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Doors), the gender-switching actress Linda Hunt ("Getta the backa the line!" this Oscar-winner was curtly told by an old biddy the other day when she inadvertently cut the queue), the huggable little playwright and character actor Wallace Shawn.... You would not exactly call them "beautiful people": indeed, they tend to be small and misshapen. Yet to shop in their company is to have one's existential batteries daily recharged.

The other day I was at the prepared-foods counter at Balducci's. And who should have the number just before mine but Carl Bernstein, whose own ontic aura, powerful enough after his Watergate reporting, was immeasurably enhanced as a result of being played by Dustin Hoffman in *All the President's Men*. Bernstein was systematically scrutinizing various kinds of chicken (fried, barbecued, *à la francaise*) with the aid of several pairs of eyeglasses—doing a bit of *investigating*, one might say. "I'm having a dinner party for twelve," he announced. "Of course," he added noisily, "I will have someone serving it for me." This latter revelation came as a relief to me and the other onlookers, who had begun to feel a little *too much* parity with the eminent figure in our midst.

One night I chanced to spot Juan Carlos of Spain at Studio 54. As the paparazzi snapped away at the monarch in the midst of the gyrating crowd, His Majesty had a funny sort of look on his face—"How am I going to explain *this* to the archbishop?" he might have been thinking. That same week a rather seedier discotheque in midtown Manhattan was raided for drugs, and a xenophobic acquaintance of mine in the Jersey suburbs happened to see its largely Puerto Rican clientele being led away by the police on the local news.

"Are there a lot of Hispanics at Studio 54 too?" the loathsome fellow twitted me the next time we ran into each other. "Hmm," I said, relishing the moment. "Come to think of it, the last time I popped in, the King of Spain was there."

JIM HOLT is New York writer.

The GOP gets Democratitis.

MAJORITY COMPLEX

By Fred Barnes

HOUSTON

Sig Rogich, the U.S. ambassador to Iceland, had an idea to spur President Bush's re-election campaign. In real life Rogich is a Republican media consultant who once produced TV spots for Bush and Ronald Reagan. So he's used to thinking up campaign ploys. "The fifty-first state," he told another GOP consultant here. If Bill Clinton is elected president, Democrats will make Washington, D.C., the fifty-first state. That's the "Willie Horton of 1992." All the president has to do is play up (and oppose) D.C. statehood. The other consultant thought Rogich had spent too much time in Iceland.

Not really. The suggestion is an example of something else: a majority complex. Most Republicans suffer from it now. It's the belief that a Republican in the White House is a permanent fact of nature. Democrats may control Congress, but there's a settled electoral majority in favor of GOP presidents. The trick is activating that majority. Republicans only have to tout the right package of issues, generally conservative ones. If they lose, it's because some outside factor intervened or the wrong issues were stressed. Now, with Bush trailing Clinton, Republicans are frantically searching for the right issues. Thus Rogich's suggestion and scores of others daily popping over the transom of the campaign.

A majority complex used to be the exclusive property of Democrats. It kept them from admitting why they kept losing the White House (in a conservative age, their candidates were too liberal). In 1980 the excuse was Jimmy Carter's personal unpopularity. In 1984 it was Ronald Reagan's amazing geniality. In 1988 it was Willie Horton. But after 1988—the fifth Democratic loss in six presidential races—Democrats recognized they had no automatic majority. They'd have to create one, and Clinton has, for the moment anyway.

The 1988 race had the opposite effect on Republicans. They decided a presidential majority was forever theirs. As Patrick Buchanan said at the convention here, working people have become GOP sympathizers. "We need to reconnect with them," he said. "We need to let them know we know they're hurting. They don't expect miracles, but they need to know we care."

Connecting isn't easy, though, thanks to what the Republicans see as Democratic duplicity. At the Democratic convention, said Texas Treasurer Kay Bailey Hutchison, "they all wore the same mask with the word 'moderate' stamped across the forehead. Take off the mask and you know what you find? The same old tax-and-spend philosophy that almost ruined the country." Dan Quayle said Democrats are trying "the me-too approach."

Me-too campaigns aren't very inspiring, says GOP strategist Mitch Daniels, but the problem for Bush and Republicans is "they sometimes win." Republicans tried them in the 1960s and 1970s. "We didn't challenge the ideals of the New Deal system. We said we would run it better." Clinton and Gore talk about the same things as Republicans: economic growth, strong defense, family values, low taxes, investment. Not only must Clinton and Gore be exposed as closet liberals, says House Republican Whip Newt Gingrich, "we must define our own values and principles and contrast clearly the very great differences between us and the values and principles of the Democratic ticket."

Gingrich is a firm believer in the existence of a

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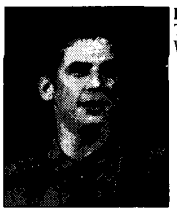

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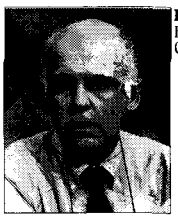

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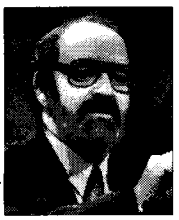

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Republican majority, and he sent an eight-page memo to Bush campaign officials on how to trigger it. "We must convince the 60 percent plus that are our natural majority that this election puts at risk their values, their jobs, their pocketbooks, and their security," Gingrich wrote. "Since we represent 60 percent plus of the American people in values, and the Democratic ticket represents about a 25 percent minority, we clearly have a moral authority gap," which must be exploited. Bush also needs to prove himself. "If I vote for George Bush and the Republicans," Gingrich asks, "will there be anything different over the next four years? Will there be any improvement in the economy, health care, and my sense of security?"

Nearly all Republicans agree with Gingrich that Bush needs "a plan of action." They just don't agree on what the plan should be. Gingrich, Housing Secretary Jack Kemp, and five other Republican officials proposed, in a letter to Bush, one that includes new tax cuts. James Cicconi, the campaign issues chief, says Bush must link his old policies and new proposals "in a way that demonstrates the fundamental philosophy which animates them and distinguishes our approach" from Clinton's. In other words, Bush needs a vision.

Cicconi and Jim Pinkerton, the campaign aide and New Paradigm theorist, wrote the preamble to the Republican platform. It zings Democrats. "They have not forgotten their art for dissembling and distortion," it says. And it identifies Republicans with "a commitment to profound change." The Democratic Party is "dominated," it declares, "by reactionaries, obsessed with the failed policies and structures of the past."

One White House aide thinks Bush needs a specific scheme for wooing wavering constituencies in the GOP coalition. His health care plan can be touted to attract small business, school choice to draw Catholics, a strong anti-crime message to appeal to suburban women, talk of opportunity and criticism of quotas to attract Asian Americans, a pitch against abortion on demand to satisfy older Americans. ("They think abortion on demand is irresponsible," the aide argues.) The only problem is Bush doesn't like to talk about some of these issues.

Bush thinks his personal attributes will activate the Republican majority. In speeches, he raises the issue of trust. "We're going to go out there to ask the American people a simple question: Who do you trust to do what's right for the United States of America? It's a question of trust." This isn't a very effective pitch, but Bush is convinced it works. "They've polled and Bush shows up well on the trust scale," says a White House official.

Quayle, to his embarrassment, found that Bush doesn't always come to mind when trust is raised. The vice president spoke at a "God and country rally" during the convention. "And so we're going to say to the American people, who do you trust?" Quayle said. "You, you, you," the crowd answered. Quayle expected them to say, "Bush, Bush, Bush." He didn't tell Bush about the incident.

Still, lack of trust isn't Bush's biggest liability. Lack of credibility is. And it's here that the majority complex has had disastrous consequences. If you believe you have a natural majority, you're bound to downgrade performance as crucial to re-election. Bush was a caretaker on domestic policy, not an active force. Now, when the public wants a strong actor, Bush has no way to prove he would be a mover on domestic concerns in a second term. His aides offer plenty of poll-tested issues to flaunt. But how can Bush acquire credibility on the economy and a domestic agenda at this late date? His aides don't know. "Credibility is showed by deeds, not by saying something again," a Bush adviser says. That's wh Bush is in so much peril. •

A defense of thirty-second campaign ads.

DAMNED SPOTS

By Stephen Bates and Edwin Diamond

With the campaign under way, it's only a matter of time before everyone begins denouncing thirty-second spots as demeaning, manipulative, and responsible for all that's wrong with American politics. David Broder, the mandarin of the op-ed page, admits he's "a crank on the subject." Otherwise staunch First Amendment champions, including *Washington Monthly* and, yes, THE NEW REPUBLIC, want Congress to restrict the content of political ads. In fact, such commercials are good for the campaign, the voter, and the republic.

To cite the most common complaints:

1. TV spots make campaigns too expensive.

The problem is nearly as old as television itself. William Benton, an ad-agency founder and a U.S. senator from Connecticut, talked of the "terrifying" cost of TV back in 1952. Campaign spending has risen sharply since then, and television advertising has contributed disproportionately. Whereas total political spending, adjusted for inflation, has tripled since 1952, the amount spent on television has increased at least fivefold. In some races, nine out of ten campaign dollars go to TV.

The important question is what candidates get in return. Quite a lot: a dollar spent on TV advertising ma reach as many voters as $3 worth of newspaper ads or $50 worth of direct mail. Banning spots would probably *increase* campaign spending, by diverting candidates to less efficient forms of communication. In addition, spots reach supporters, opponents, and fence-sitters alike. This mass auditing imposes a measure of accountability that other media, particularly direct mail, lack.

2. A candidate can't say anything substantive in thirty seconds.

Referring to sound bites as well as spots, Michael

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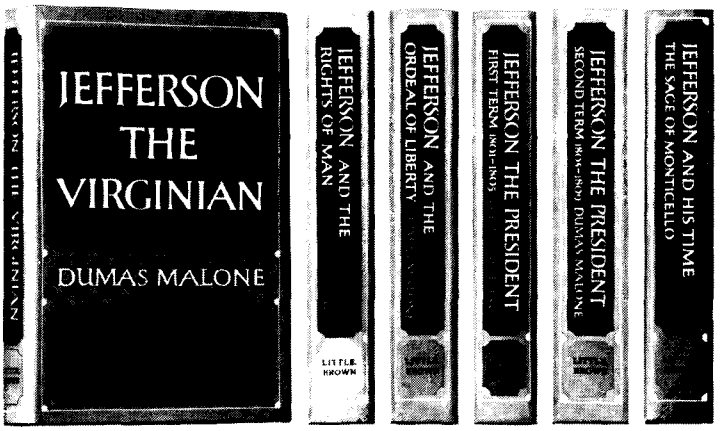

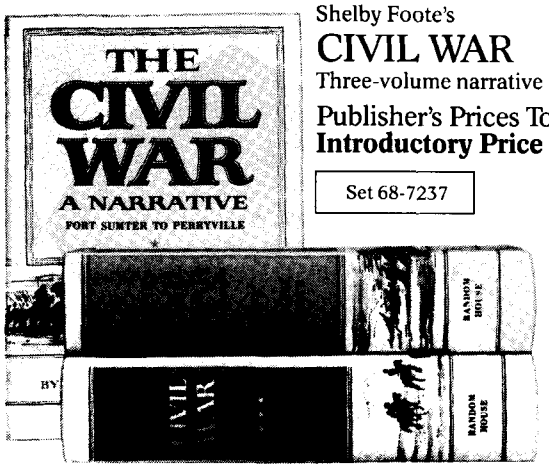

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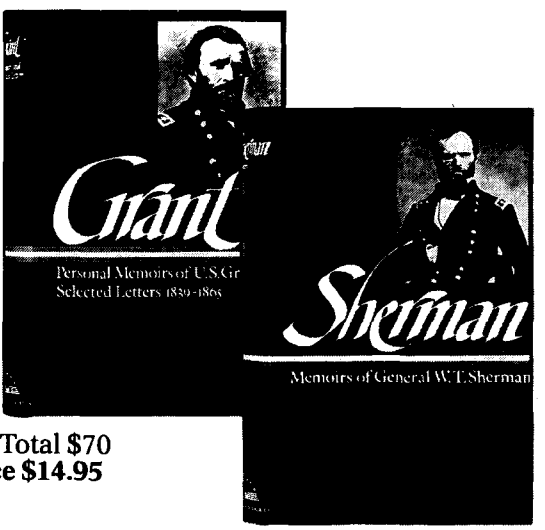

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Dukakis sourly concluded that the 1988 campaign was about "phraseology," not ideology. But a lot can be said in thirty seconds. John Lindsay's 1972 presidential campaign broadcast a thirty-second spot in Florida that gave the candidate's positions on, among other issues, gun control (for), abortion rights (for), and school prayer (against). Lindsay's media manager, David Garth, later joked that the spot "probably lost the entire population of Florida."

A candidate can even make his point in ten seconds. In California's recent Republican primary for U.S. Senate, one spot said simply: "I'm Bruce Herschensohn. My opponent, Tom Campbell, was the only Republican congressman opposing the 1990 anti-crime bill. He's liberal and wrong." Campbell replied in kind: "Bruce Herschensohn is lying. Tom Campbell voted to extend the death penalty to twenty-seven crimes, and was named Legislator of the Year by the California Fraternal Order of Police."

Though hardly encyclopedic, these spots reveal something about the candidates' priorities. They assert facts that can be checked and conclusions that can be challenged. If nothing else, they improve on what may have been the first ten-second spot, broadcast in 1954: "Minnesota needs a wide-awake governor! Vote for Orville Freeman and bring wide-awake action to Minnesota's problems!"

Brief ads do have one shortcoming. In thirty seconds, a candidate cannot hope to answer a half-true attack spot. In Bush's "revolving door" prison ad of 1988, for instance, the voice-over says that Dukakis "gave weekend furloughs to first-degree murderers not eligible for parole," while the text on the screen tells viewers that "268 escaped" and "many are still at large." But as reporters discovered, only four of the 268 escapees were first-degree murderers, and only three escapees—none of them a murderer—were still at large. The Willie Horton example was an aberration.

This point might have been hard for the Dukakis team to convey in thirty seconds. What kept them from responding to Hortonism, however, was not the constraints of brevity; it was their decision to try to get public attention off the furlough program—a subject that, even without the Bush campaign's factual finagling, was bound to cost them votes. No sensible candidate will defend himself by saying he's only half as bad as his opponent charges.

Just as short spots aren't invariably shallow, long telecasts aren't invariably thoughtful. The 1960 John F. Kennedy campaign aired a two-minute spot with a bouncy jingle; it conveyed youth and vitality, but scarcely any information (except for a musical reference to Kennedy's Catholicism: "Can you deny to any man / The right he's guaranteed / To be elected president / No matter what his creed?"). As Ross Perot demonstrated, a candidate determined to be evasive can do so in a thirty-second spot or in a two-hour live Q&A session.

3. Political ads are responsible for the low-down-and-dirty state of political discourse.

According to Arthur Schlesinger Jr., television is "draining content out of campaigns." But that assertion romanticizes the past. In the 1890s James Bryce, a Briton, decried American political campaigns in 1990s terms. Campaigns devote less attention to issues, he fretted, than to "questions of personal fitness," such as any "irregularity" in the candidate's relations with women. These issueless campaigns diminish the "confidence of the country in the honor of its public men."

Sleazy ads hardly raise the level of political discourse, but they aren't the superweapon that critics claim. "When a client of ours is attacked," boasts Democratic consultant Bob Squier, "the people of that state are going to get some kind of response the next day." These responses are invariably revealing. In a 1988 Dukakis ad, the candidate watches a TV set showing a Bush ad. "I'm fed up with it," Dukakis says. "Never seen anything like it in twenty-five years of public life—George Bush's negative television ads, distorting my record. . . ." But instead of presenting a sharp reply, Dukakis only turns off the set—a metaphor for his entire campaign.

4. TV ads keep the potatoes on the couch.

Barely half of eligible citizens voted in 1988, the lowest turnout in forty years. In fact, turnout has declined steadily since 1960, during the same period campaign-TV expenditures have tripled in constant dollars. Many of the TV dollars have been diverted from doorbell pushing, rallies, and other activities that involve citizens in politics. And, according to critics, simplistic, unfair spots discourage people from voting.

It is nearly impossible to untangle the factors that influence voter turnout. Some consultants, like Republican Eddie Mahe, argue that the decline in voting is a passing consequence of demographics. In the 1960s and 1970s the baby-boom generation reached voting age and lowered voting figures (so did the 26th Amendment, which changed the voting age from 21 to 18). No surprises there: turnout is traditionally lower among the young. So, as the boomer generation ages, turnout will increase.

As for how spots affect turnout in particular elections, the evidence goes both ways. In the 1990 race for U.S. Senate in North Carolina, early polls showed blue-collar whites inclined to stay home. But many of them turned out to vote for Jesse Helms after his anti-quotas spot received heavy air play and news coverage.

Are spots, then, blameless for the parlous state of voter participation? Well, no. Even if they don't cloud the mind, they may in some sense sap the political will. To the extent that spots resemble lifestyle commercials—It's Miller Time, It's Morning in America—they may be taken no more seriously than other TV advertising. This is especially so when no other campaign is visible to the viewer. Today's political rally, as Democratic consultant Robert Shrum has said, consists of three people around the TV set.

But the doomsayers' solution—to try to divorce politics from TV—won't work. Since the 1950s the voting classes have increasingly stayed home to be entertained,

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a trend encouraged by demographics (the suburban migration), by new at-home options (cable, VCRs), and at least partly by fear (crime in the streets). Banning political spots, as some cranks in the press and Congress would do, wouldn't bring voters outdoors. It would deprive the couch-potato/citizen of a sometimes abused but ultimately unmatched source of electoral information. As Dukakis discovered, melodramatically turning off the TV resolves nothing.

STEPHEN BATES and EDWIN DIAMOND are the authors of *The Spot: The Rise of Political Advertising on Television* (MIT Press), published this month in a third edition.

The College Republican road trip.

SINGLE WHITE MALES

By Michael Lewis

In the cold light of dawn a band of weary College Republicans creep toward a small stand in a New Orleans park, about a mile from the ooze of the Mississippi River. They have driven through the night from Washington on their way to Houston. Some have arrived here for a planned pre-Convention rally as early as 2 a.m. and waited out the night under the oaks. When the sun rises there is no parade, no crowd, no mayoral benediction—all of which have been half-promised. A lesser species would beat a quick retreat. Not this one. The young zealots are determined to continue, unaware that what awaits them at their journey's end is the thing every Republican fears most.

A pretty Republican girl festooned with buttons takes up a position by a picnic table. Another produces a stack of little pink slips filled with bullet-pointed factoids about Bill Clinton, prepared for distribution to the masses. The absence of the masses doesn't discourage them. The young Republicans simply hand out their pink slips to each other. About twenty of the College Republicans climb onto a bandstand; the remaining twenty form a crowd on the ground below. The stage group waves an enormous photograph of Dan Quayle and a sign that says, "It's a cool thing to vote for Bush-Quayle." There are a few short speeches, then a hand releases a single, small cluster of helium balloons: red, white, and blue. Up, up it drifts ... and gets stuck in a tree. The watchful crowd goes silent, and a single, startling voice explodes: "SHOOT IT!"

The voice that comes out of the crowd is louder and more dangerous than anything the slight, translucent young men seemed capable of. The crowd separates. There, standing inside the group like a watermelon inside of an acorn, is about 300 pounds of flesh, encased in several yards of hiking shorts and a T-shirt the size of a small parachute.

From there we can cut to a large rental van driven by this remarkable young Republican, named Fred. He is a junior at Morgan State College, the state party chairman for Maryland, and the spiritual leader of a convoy of ten cars filled with College Republicans and billing itself as the Caravan for Freedom. All the cars are papered over with Bush-Quayle signs. All the cars but one contain young white males wearing blue jeans, T-shirts, and docksiders. The only break in the pattern is the van carrying the seven black College Republicans. I can only imagine what the highway drivers of the South think when they glimpse what looks like a huge metal Bush bumper sticker filled with young black men flying past them at 90 mph.

Sweating in the back behind Fred are five other College Republicans, most of whom introduce themselves as chairmen of something or other in the intricate College Republican hierarchy. Fred spills out of the driver's seat in every direction, casting a shadow across them and the three dozen doughnuts on the floor by his seat. Beside him for most of the trip is a giant fast food soda cup that says BIG DOG ON DUTY.

As we rocket bumper to bumper through Louisiana's cypress swamps, Fred tells me that he lives in inner-city Baltimore. Apropos of this, and of his salvo in the park, I ask him what he thinks of handgun control. He pulls himself up and announces to every sentient creature within about six miles, "WHEN YOU OUTLAW GUNS ONLY OUTLAWS WILL HAVE GUNS!"

I'm so astounded by the volume that it takes a moment to realize this isn't original. Fred has a strange gift for delivering far-right-wing Republican doctrine in the rhythm of Jesse Jackson. When I ask him about George Bush's problems, Fred's decibel level, if anything, increases:

"It is not my place or anybody's place to second-guess the president. I offer my services to George Bush, and these good people in the back offer their services, and we do it without question or doubt. We're going to storm the voting booth in November. And we're going to win a second term. The politics of the past is not going to be the politics of the future." Then, over his shoulder, almost as an afterthought: "You guys feel the same way or what?"

After six hours of this we arrive at the Days Inn in the most dangerous section of North Houston, where about 400 College Republicans have already checked in, six to a room. Their soft white bodies fill the pool. They have transformed the plain-faced motel into a naval tenement house: white sheets spray-painted with campaign slogans hang from every balcony. The Caravan for Freedom is cheered as it arrives.

The next evening more than a thousand College Republicans collect at the H&H Ranch, which isn't a ranch at all. It's a piece of flat land beside a golf course with ponds, courts, fields, and a couple of tents; here the

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right-wing youth of America frolic and feed. Two pale, hairless boys from Arkansas spray paint a large sign detailing the ugly side of Clinton's record. KEEP BILL OUT OF THE FLOWERS, says one of the about 600 finished ones pinned to every available surface.

The men who run the College Republicans are friendly, intelligent, preternaturally efficient, and acute in handling the press. An especially nice fellow named George spies me standing alone and grabs me by the elbow. He points to two striking blond giantesses wearing short pants, tight shirts, and cowboy hats. They are noticeable in this crowd, which easily could be a party at an uncool fraternity.

"Would you like to meet them?" he asks.

Already the beauties are looking over at us with electoral expectancy. Fairly certain I am being thrust into that large, Machiavellian corner in which College Republican politics meets sex, I consent. It is a mistake. The two women from Virginia are clearly unused to any kind of ideological resistance. The conversation takes a fateful turn when the older of the two shouts at me, "It's going to be Bush in '92 and Kemp in '96!"

"Kemp? But what about Dan Quayle?" I ask.

"Dan ... Quayle ... is ... a ... great ... man."

"I never said he wasn't."

"The liberal media tries to make him look stupid. You probably don't even know that card had an 'e' on it. THE TEACHER GAVE IT TO HIM. You never read about THAT in the media."

"Actually it was in *The New York Times*."

"No it wasn't."

"Yes it was. I read it."

"No it wasn't."

She turns to leave, but stops to deliver one last truth.

"Dan ... Quayle ... is ... a ... genius."

At the back of the ranch, the leaders of the College Republicans gather in a small tent to participate in the taping of a documentary on American politics. The event turns out to be an unwitting documentary on the implosion of Reagan-Bush Republicanism. Not that the producers of the show had anything so sophisticated in mind. The event is hosted by Robert Downey Jr., an actor famous for portraying alienated yuppie drug dealers. When he arrives at the ranch he is instantly surrounded by a peristaltic mass of adoring College Republicans. Now he sits on one side of a long picnic table facing the two sign painters from Arkansas, one of the Virginia beauties, and Charismatic Leader Bill Spadea. Looking over them on higher benches, like hundreds of Mannerist angels, are row upon row of perfectly worshipful young Republicans.

"We believe in the values of the family," Spadea is saying. "But Congress has continually fought these values ..." The crowd starts to chant: "Bill For President! Bill For President!." Bill is clearly enjoying this proximity to celebrity.

Downey asks if "the so-called cultural elite" are to blame for the decline in Spadea's family values. "Well," says Spadia, gamely, "a lot of what they say on TV has no value base.... And the American people are sick of it."

Another great cheer goes up, and Downey fidgets. If George Bush has so many values, he asks, how come he's been involved with drug peddlers in covert operations?

"That's just hearsay. You're talking basically a lot of media people ... a lot of hearsay."

The microphone swings to a pallid, thin woman. "I find there is a great hypocrisy within the cultural elite. In the '60s they were demonstrating for free speech. Now this very same cultural elite are the tenured radicals trying to curtail free speech. There's an extremely liberal bias in everything from TV to the professors."

The crowd bays for blood.

"To me PC and liberalism is worse than McCarthyism ever was."

The crowd stomps on the picnic benches. Veins bulge on the sides of necks. People in the crowd begin to taunt Downey directly.

"You see, the liberal press didn't like to hear that!"

"We don't trust your corporation!"

The crowd pushes toward the table. The director of the film jumps in. "There is no corporate involvement in our film ..." he begins.

"It's nice to think that!" shouts a young man looking much like a future partner in Sherman & Sterling.

"This isn't MTV sponsored," shouts the director.

A bench full of people collapses in the rear and bodies fall everywhere, but hardly anyone notices.

"All we see on MTV are liberals!" shouts the mob.

"We asked Bush ..." starts the director. But he's made a tactical error; he's now MTV again, and the crowd shouts him down. Downey is back. "Are there any pro-choice Republicans in the audience?" he asks.

"No!"

But it's too late. A woman grabs the microphone, provoking a full-scale panic.

"The true conservative view is economic not religious ...," she begins.

"George, stop her!" a voice wails.

"Shit," says George, standing beside me.

"Who picked her?" someone whispers.

"She's someone from New York," comes the reply.

"What's her name?" asks another. "Get her name."

And then comes the most startling voice in a three-state area; it booms with the authority of Yahweh speaking to Charlton Heston:

USE YOUR HEAD, NOT YOUR PENIS!

I turn. Downey turns. Everyone turns. And there stands Fred. He's not happy. Downey may not like the point of view, but he knows good television when he sees it. Out he comes, seizes Fred by the arm, and pulls him center stage. He wants a sound bite; Fred, of course, gives him something more closely resembling a full meal.

I THINK THE PROBLEM HERE IN AMERICA IS THAT TOO MANY PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT CHOICE. WOMEN'S CHOICE. WHAT ABOUT THE WOMEN WHO ARE STARTING OUT IN THE WOMB. WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN STARTING OUT IN THE WOMB. WHAT ABOUT THE BABY IN THE WOMB?

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The crowd goes completely ape, and Fred wants to go on, but Downey, seeming ever so slightly possessive, has taken back his microphone. The crowd responds with another attack.

"He didn't like it!"

"Down with the corporation!"

It's delicious: they've forgotten, if only for a moment, that they are the ones who are supposed to be *for* the corporation.

In the end the noise was too much. The film crew just gave up. The lights went off and the camera people together with Robert Downey Jr. moved to find a more peaceful place to ply their trade. As I made my own way to the exit, I couldn't help but notice a young couple off near some bushes, working hard to undermine College Republican morality. •

An unlikely Mideast gambit.

WATER FOR PEACE

By Irwin Ploss and Jonathan Rubinstein

With Yitzhak Rabin's election as prime minister of Israel, hopes for a Middle East peace settlement are rising once again. But could water be the secret key to peace in the region? Almost one-third of Israel's fresh water (130 billion gallons per year) is derived from aquifers in what Israel calls Judea and Samaria, and what the Arabs call the West Bank. Israel cannot survive, especially with the prospect of increased immigration and the natural population increase of both Jews and Arabs, without retaining access to this water or replacing it from some other source. That is a real security problem.

Even with the water from the West Bank, Israel's water consumption exceeds natural replacement. Therefore the water table is constantly lowering, and the salinity of coastal wells is increasing. Many wells have become useless for drinking water and irrigation. Shortages of fresh water in Gaza are chronic, and Jordan faces an ever greater water crisis because of its growing population and an influx of refugees from Kuwait.

Some political scientists have proposed exchanging territorial concessions by Israel for the right to import water from Syria or even Turkey. But such ideas are conducive to war, not peace. Possible threats to withhold water are intolerable to contemplate; Israel is not likely to allow itself to be dependent upon Turkey or Syria for its survival. Water cannot be a consequence of peace; it is a condition for making peace.

From the time of Israel's independence, water has been the source of conflicts between Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, and Syria. In 1948 President Truman proposed a conference to consider the joint exploitation of water from the Jordan River and its tributaries. In the 1960s Syria's attempts to divert water passing through the Golan Heights were a motivation for Israel's occupation there. The West Bank autonomy talks arising from the Camp David Accords faltered in 1982; a major sticking point was how to share water from the Judean Hills aquifer. Water is one of the subjects of the current round of peace talks as well.

The only real source of new fresh water in the region is desalinated sea water, and the desalting of any significant volume of water requires an enormous amount of power. Nuclear power poses ecological, strategic, and political problems. Coal or oil-fired thermal power plants could provide the power necessary to desalt large quantities of water. But Israel does not have coal or oil, and would be reluctant to rely upon foreign suppliers who could, in effect, turn off its water tap, as in 1967, when Egypt cut off shipping to Israel by way of the Red Sea, or 1973, when Iran cut off its oil. The same goes for the idea of piping natural gas across Saudi Arabia. Moreover, burning fossil fuel on the scale required would have serious environmental consequences.

Hydroelectric power is the only feasible possibility. Geologically, Israel may be viewed as a dam that holds back the Mediterranean Sea and all the world's oceans from pouring down into a great rift whose most famous feature, the Dead Sea, is 1,300 feet below sea level. It is the lowest point on Earth, a unique resource to produce power.

In the past century there have been several plans to produce power by utilizing the drop in altitude between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea. At the end of the nineteenth century Theodore Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, and a French engineer each suggested a power project. Walter Clay Lowdermilk, a well-known hydrologist, conducted a survey of Palestine in 1938 for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In 1944 he wrote *Palestine, Land of Promise*, in which he proposed a Jordan Valley Authority, which would transport sea water from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea through a seven-mile concrete-lined canal plus a twenty-mile tunnel, thus producing 150,000 to 220,000 kilowatts, enough to serve the needs of 100,000 people. In recent years there have been several so-called Med-Dead Canal proposals. But no such scheme would produce enough power to warrant the cost.

Desalting has been seriously tested. A joint U.S.-Israel project to design and construct a large-scale prototype desalting plant at Ashdod, Israel, was completed in 1985. It was abandoned because the high cost of energy appeared to make the process uneconomical. Now more economical desalting technology is widely used in Israel, the United States, and elsewhere. Costs vary from $3 per 1,000 gallons to $6 per 1,000 gallons.

No plan, however, has combined all the elements of our proposal—particularly the enlargement of the Dead Sea from 400 to 840 square miles to provide a much

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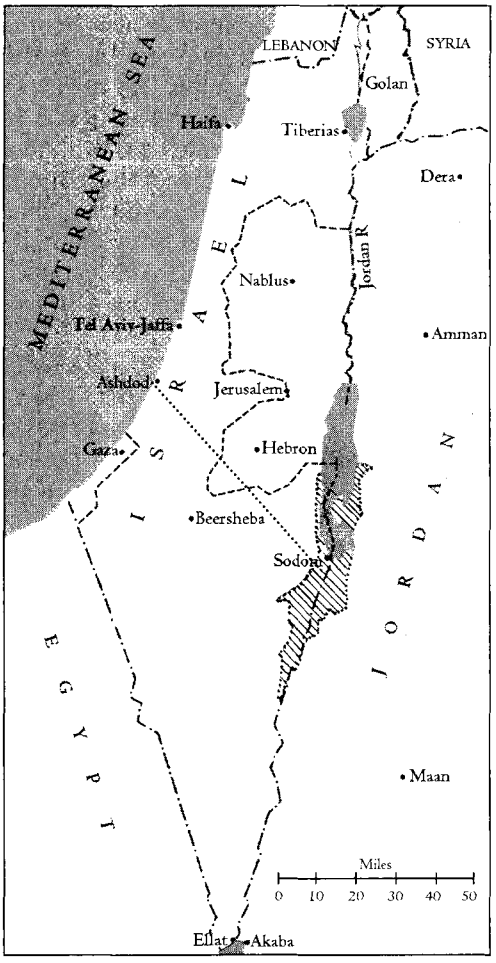
greater evaporation surface. Here's how it would work: a passageway about forty miles long must be constructed for sea water to pass at approximately sea level from Ashdod to the vicinity of the Dead Sea south of Sodom, and then be dropped vertically at least 1,200 feet. According to calculations made by Myron Robinson, a physicist, and Arnold Rochman, a consulting engineer, both retained by our institute, a flow of water of 2.5 trillion gallons annually would enable turbines to generate 1,000 megawatts of power, about three-fourths of the output of the Hoover Dam, and about one-fourth of Israel's present power use. The power would then be transmitted back to the Mediterranean shore, where it would be used to desalt 350 to 400 billion gallons of water per year, almost all of Israel's current water consumption.

The scheme sounds implausible. It certainly is not simple or cheap. Four hundred forty arid and unpopulated square miles adjacent to the Dead Sea in Jordan and Israel must be excavated down to 1,300 feet below sea level. An enlarged Dead Sea with a surface area of 840 square miles would evaporate the 2.5 trillion gallons of Mediterranean Sea water being brought to the area annually. Evaporation is the only means of ensuring that the size and altitude of the enlarged Dead Sea remain stable. If the inflow exceeds the evaporation rate, the level of the water will rise. Since power generated is proportional to the height through which water falls, a higher Dead Sea level results in reduced power output; water cannot be pumped out from the lowest point on Earth without a greater power expenditure than the inflow produced.



PROPOSED ROUTE OF THE MED-DEAD SEA CANAL
THE AREA TO BE FLOODED IS STRIPED
MAP BY MYRON ROBINSON

The necessary excavation would require far more than the 200 million cubic yards of land removed in the construction of the Panama Canal. We estimate that this excavation would be 1,500 times greater. However, modern earth-moving equipment and the more favorable conditions of the Dead Sea area, which is free of the pestilential conditions under which the Panama Canal was constructed, make the task considerably easier.

The ecological considerations of the plan must be evaluated carefully by geologists, climatologists, and others. The vastly increased size of the Dead Sea would mean additional condensation in the area. Even though the prevailing winds would blow much of it to Israel's west coast, it may alter the climate by increasing humidity. The saltiness of the Dead Sea would increase over time. Will that matter? There is some wildlife in the area that may require relocation. There may be geologic consequences from the removal of the earth and replacement by water, reducing the weight of the surface over the rift, and changing the pressure on the rock beneath the surface. Luckily, the area to be flooded is not thought to be of great archeological significance. But if the excavators find anything important, they can stop before turning on the water.

This plan's cost, which would be many billions of dollars, is beyond the means of Israel and Jordan. Therefore it would require international sponsorship and financing. Only then can Israel and Jordan discuss its implementation, and the users' fees by which the original cost would be repaid.

All of these difficulties are daunting, but they are not insurmountable, particularly when weighed against the benefits of such a scheme. Water is vital to Jordan too. The Jordanians would be asked to allow several hundred square miles of very thinly populated desert in their country to be flooded with salt water, in addition to the roughly equivalent portion of Israeli desert. But in return they would receive a negotiated share of the water and power produced. In these negotiations, the future use of the 130 billion gallons from the disputed area now used by Israel annually could be determined by Jordanians and Palestinians. Cooperation for the enormous mutual benefit of all the parties would surely be more conducive to long-term peace than the wearying recriminations and mistrust of the present. Peace cannot be imposed on people, but the enormous benefits of a vast increase in electric power and fresh water are solid and demonstrable.

The plan would certainly reduce the unemployment problems in the area. There is an existing pool of engineers, technicians, construction workers, and unskilled labor to draw from. Rather than competing for scarce work, Arab and Israeli workers would have to plan together and to build together. It might be habit-forming.

Much of the excavated material would be useful. Some, of course, would be used to build the sea-level passageway from the Mediterranean to the new Dead Sea. But most of it might be used to make a substantial level plain for future solar energy production. The production of solar energy on a significant scale requires a

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flat surface, and the Negev Desert is hilly. A huge amount of landfill, providing a large, flat surface, would be an investment in the not-so-distant future when solar power will be economically feasible.

This project, a proposal for which we recently submitted to mining engineers, hydrologists, and the Foreign Ministry in Israel, would be one of the great engineering enterprises of modern times. Intensive study is required to ensure its feasibility. Several years will be required to develop the plans, arrange the financing, assemble the specialists and the equipment, complete the excavation, build the conduit and the generators, and, in approximately ten years, generate the power and desalinate water. But if it works, Israel's fears about its need for water would be diminished, along with the fears of the Jordanians and Palestinians. Cooperation for a mutual benefit will greatly enhance the probability of fruitful negotiations over what are, after all, far simpler matters. And when cooperation replaces confrontation, it might be time to give the Dead Sea a new name: the Sea of Peace.

IRWIN PLOSS and JONATHAN RUBINSTEIN are associated with the New York-based Center for Research on Institutions and Social Policy, Inc.

BAALBEK POSTCARD

WITH THE HEZBOLLAH

By Geraldine Brooks

In the Middle East, creepy places rarely look malevolent. Azure skies and waving palm trees are at odds with our cold war imagery, where evil always happened under steel-gray clouds, in sleet-slicked streets of skeletal birches. The Sheik Abdullah barracks in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley form one exception—a hermetic fortress on an unassailable escarpment from which invisible eyes peer down on the town it dominates. Hezbollah housed its militia here, and Iran sent Revolutionary Guards to train them. It is easy to believe the local rumors that Western hostages were held in its fastness. But on July 27 Hezbollah moved out of the barracks and the Lebanese army moved back in. It was the biggest concession Hezbollah has yet made to the slow restoration of sovereignty by the central government.

To the manager of the venerable Palmyra Hotel, Hezbollah isn't moving out a minute too soon. Since Hezbollah arrived about ten years ago, the barracks have been a constant reminder of why business is dismal at this grand establishment, whose visitors book, since 1874, has been signed by the likes of Goethe, Kaiser Wilhelm, Charles de Gaulle, and Edward VII. These days, any foreigner who turns up at the hotel is a celebrity. Hezbollah has turned Baalbek into a mullah's kind of town: plastering its streets with larger-than-life portraits of Khomeini, banning the sale of alcohol, and haranguing women to wear Islamic dress. The manager fusses over his rare guest, finding me an even rarer cold beer—complimentary and consumed in private in accordance with Hezbollah regulations. Taking me to the terrace, he circles like a sheep dog, trying to keep my gaze directed west, where Baalbek's exquisite Roman ruins glow rose-red in the soft afternoon light. To the east, the ugly barracks loom behind us. I ask him to translate the man-high Arabic graffiti scrawled across the gray concrete walls. He turns reluctantly, shades his eyes with an elegant hand, and scans the message. Turning back, he emits a sigh that seems to rise all the way from his toes. "It says something for Palestine, against America—some things such as that." Given Lebanon's need for U.S. aid and investment, the Lebanese army will probably let the graffiti fade away, peeling and flaking to illegibility in a few months of strong Mediterranean sun.

Hezbollah says its militia has gone south, to concentrate on its main enemy, Israel. This suits its patrons, Syria and Iran. Syria wants to be seen to be successfully keeping Lebanon's fragile peace; Iran's need to rebuild an economy and restock its armory requires, for now, a lowering of its profile as an international troublemaker. So Hezbollah, with the example of Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front before it, has begun to explore revolution through ballots instead of bullets. In Lebanon's poorest quarters, the Party of God has become a prolific dispenser of pork barrel largess: running cheap hospitals, providing clean water, setting up decent schools.

To some of the Lebanese in Baalbek, Hezbollah's diminishing militance is welcome. "The whole town of Baalbek has been a hostage," grumbles one young café owner. For a while, he had to take Perrier off his menu because illiterate Hezbollahis kept harassing him, mistaking the green bottles for Heineken beer. Last summer he complained to Hezbollahis who had been hectoring a skimpily dressed young tourist from Beirut. "These Hezbollah kids aren't even from Baalbek—the Iranians bribed them all to come here from rural villages. I said to them, 'You don't care about my income because your income comes from outside this town. Can I go to your village and tell everyone there that I want to see them all wearing pink?' Tourists come here, see the ruins, and then head to Zahle [the next town] to buy a drink and enjoy themselves." To cheer himself up, the café owner watches his favorite video, *Delta Force IV*, in which American commandos splatter a group of mullahs not at all unlike Hezbollah.

Fear of Hezbollah among ordinary Lebanese is on the wane. On my first trip to Beirut in early 1991, I hired a Druse taxi driver who was built like a tree and had a reputation for fearlessly ferrying journalists through war zones. I wanted to visit Hezbollah's Great Prophet Mosque, a huge concrete structure on the strip of

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Beirut's airport road that had become famous as a Kiss and Ride for kidnap victims. He wouldn't take me. "They'll kill you, and then they'll kill me," he said. Another driver stepped on the gas every time we neared the mosque, making me lock my door and roll up my window. "Look at that minaret," he said, pointing to the mosque's spire, passing in a blur. The minaret bristled with antennae, all pointing toward Iran. "*Why* do they need that at a mosque?"

I found out when I returned to Beirut toward the end of the year, when Hezbollah had almost emptied its dungeons of Western captives (as it now has done) and had set up a public relations office to handle inquiries from the press about future hostage releases and its new political profile. Hezbollah has diversified from militias into media. The mosque's minaret is a convenient high point from which to boost the signal for Al Manar—the Beacon—its television station. Al Manar isn't exactly MTV, but it does season a diet of Koran readings and Iranian war documentaries with an occasional Walt Disney film or sports round-up. Even those programs must be Islamically correct. Western movies can't have any political content or kissing. Al Manar carried the recent Wimbledon tennis tournament, but only the men's matches, because the women players were too skimpily dressed.

It is in the basement of the Great Prophet Mosque that the new face of Hezbollah is most vividly on display. Amid bales of cloth and European couture catalogs, Hezbollah is breaking into the fashion business. Flipping through a German catalog, the factory's manager, who introduces herself as Hajjia Zahra, looks for new styles in pockets, belts, and sleeves that can be incorporated into the long, figure-hiding dresses prescribed by Islam. She explains that the bright bales of cloth—the reds and yellows—will be used for the factory's hot-selling line of children's clothes. The muted browns, grays, and dull greens are for the women's fashions. "These are calm colors," she explains. "Part of the philosophy of Islamic dress is for a woman to project an aura of calm and tranquillity." Hajjia Zahra hires unemployed women for her factory. "My Islam isn't a bunch of fighters. It's a revolution of culture, of ideas," she enthuses. Then she explains that profits from the business are distributed to the families of "martyrs" killed fighting Israeli troops in Israel's self-declared south Lebanon "security zone."

Despite its diversifications—there is also a perfume business, a cut-price supermarket, even a Hezbollah-run flower-arranging class—the Party of God remains very much "a bunch of fighters" where Israel is concerned. By stepping up attacks on Israel's Lebanon-based forces, it has tried to torpedo any Lebanese role in Middle East peace talks. But the intensification of its Sisyphean conflict with Israel represents a considerable narrowing of focus for a group whose enemies list once included half of Lebanon and the entire Western world.

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Gorbachev's afterlife.

SHAKY FOUNDATION

By Andrew Meier

Mikhail Gorbachev's recent tour of the United States may not have done much to further democracy back home, but it did serve its real purpose: to shore up his pension fund. The last Soviet president was ostensibly here to mark the end of the cold war. But while he was at it, he quietly secured a U.S. tax-exempt lifeline for his new endeavor, the International Foundation for Socio-Economic and Political Studies, known more familiarly as "The Gorbachev Foundation." For two weeks he flitted around the country, flopping down rent-free in presidential suites while collecting more than $1 million from public appearances and private fund-raisers. From CEOs to Rockefellers to old Reaganites, Gorbachev found a sympathetic audience at every stop.

Few, however, knew the history of the institute that houses the Moscow headquarters of the Gorbachev Foundation. For more than two decades Sovietologists knew it as the "School With No Name," and locals called it the "Marxist-Leninist School." A well-appointed, high-security compound in downtown Moscow, the institute was in fact an ideological boot camp known for its KGB connections. So-called *Nelegal'ny* (illegals)—Communists from countries where the Party was banned—traveled there incognito to study the Party line. A few years ago moderate leadership took over, and the school became the Institute for Social Sciences. Last year one of Gorbachev's Kremlin aides, Georgi Shakhnazarov, took over as president, and another Politburo pensioner, Alexander Yakovlev, became vice president. When Gorbachev fell, the institute became his refuge, and he moved in with 200 researchers, including the bulk of his old Kremlin staff.

With few friends left at home, Gorbachev found an unlikely foreign comrade to help boost his foundation abroad. With Gorbachev's blessing, a 41-year-old impresario named Jim Garrison started soliciting American sponsors for the Gorbachev Foundation early this year from a small office in San Francisco. Garrison was well connected in the old USSR. When Gorbachev was still in the Kremlin, Garrison pursued ways to make money by tapping Russian resources. At one point he was bullish on Soviet onion dehydration plants; later he dreamed of a global satellite communication company. After failing to win the Democratic nomination for California's 12th congressional district in 1988, he discovered a market for reformed Communists on the American lecture circuit.

Flouting a cursory knowledge of things Russian from

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his days at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, Garrison stood apart from the hordes of Western entrepreneurs chasing the glasnost gold rush. Previously known for its quest for higher consciousness through encounter group therapy and rolfing, Esalen had found its way to the USSR in the 1980s. From 1985 to '89 Garrison headed Esalen's Soviet-American Exchange Program, which imported Soviet scientists, writers, and psychics to soak in hot tubs and absorb good vibes. It was through this private diplomacy that Garrison first made contact with prominent refugees from Soviet officialdom. After months of courtship, in 1989 he coaxed Boris Yeltsin, then still an outcast, into coming to America as a guest of Esalen.

Some see Garrison as a marionette, others as a fund-raising wizard. The truth lies somewhere in between. He did come up with the idea of establishing a U.S. affiliate for Gorbachev's foundation that would fund the U.S. tour, and provide legal, accounting, and other advice to the Moscow branch. But sources knowledgeable about the venture say that Gorbachev's aides realized a U.S. branch might come in handy as a hard currency safe, to keep dollars from the Yeltsin government. A tax-exempt U.S. affiliate would offer all the conveniences of a Swiss bank account without the stigma. Yeltsin thus far has tolerated the foundation; according to Garrison, part of his truce with Gorbachev was that he would do so as long as the foundation remained non-political.

After Yeltsin's first tour, Garrison set up his own consulting firm, Diomedes, Inc., to develop joint ventures in the old USSR. Since then he has provided passage for an impressive series of ex-Communists in the West. Garrison helped Eduard Shevardnadze found his own Moscow think tank, the Foreign Policy Association, and last May coordinated his U.S. visit, arranging speaking engagements and private meetings with donors. Then in October he arranged for two heroes of the August coup—St. Petersburg Mayor Anatoly Sobchak and industry leader Arkady Volsky—to appear at a Bear Stearns conference in Moscow. In November he shepherded Alexander Yakovlev around the United States.

Garrison finally got through to Gorbachev himself last December 20, just days before he stepped down. The talk ostensibly concerned Garrison's latest endeavor, the "Russian Winter Campaign." According to Garrison, Gorbachev requested immediate food aid—soy burgers shipped from San Diego to Moscow—and agreed to co-chair the relief venture with Shevardnadze and Yakovlev. Earlier this year Garrison declared that the campaign would send enough canned food and medical supplies "to fill at least thirty cargo planes by summer." The campaign's fund-raising letter assured sponsors that the KGB would guarantee that the shipments reached their destinations. Garrison's office reports ten planeloads were sent; U.S. foundation executives were dubious about channeling relief through the KGB.

Garrison had more luck with the Gorbachev tour. He took great care to ensure that it would not attract the bad press Ronald Reagan earned for collecting multimillion-dollar honoraria in Japan. Garrison began by lining up credible sponsors. George Shultz agreed to be a host, and Reagan then joined the host committee as its honorary chairman. Democrat Alan Cranston, eager for an image-makeover himself, also signed on. Garrison then culled sponsors from the ranks of retired CEOs: Dwayne Andreas, ex-head of Archer Daniels Midland, Tom Watson, ex-head of IBM, and Don Kendall, ex-head of Pepsico.

The last pangs of Gorbomania have kept the merry-go-round moving. By the tour's close it appeared that Gorbachev had collected more sponsors than Michael Jordan. Five groups in Chicago paid $180,000 to ensure he stopped there. Gorbachev met with the heads of Coke, Delta, American Express, and Paramount, among others. Garrison would not say which corporations gave money but put the total amount raised at $1.2 million. He repeatedly told the media that $3 million was needed for "start-up costs" for the Moscow foundation and its San Francisco auxiliary. One million, Garrison contends, is needed to cover projects in Moscow. The other $2 million would remain in the S.F. kitty, to cover costs of the tour and to provide unspecified assistance to Moscow. To date, however, he has made no final dollar figure public.

When asked about the foundation's mission, Garrison responded that "Mr. Gorbachev desires a think tank to study the meaning of the new world order, with an emphasis on developing mechanisms to manage and direct change." When pushed, he recites a number of high-minded projects: scholarly exchanges, translations of Locke, J.S. Mill, Jefferson, and Voltaire into Russian, a "Green Cross" for disaster relief, and an annual Gorbachev Prize ("Kind of like the Nobel, with compensation on the same scale").

Still, everything was going swimmingly until questions from former Ambassador Arthur Hartman and Susan Eisenhower, DDE's granddaughter, who heads the Washington-based Center for Post-Soviet Studies, about what the foundation might actually do and how much it would cost raised questions about many potential backers. There's much more hostility back home. Gorbachev's think tank presents Moscow's other foundations with competition for U.S. funds. Heads of rival research institutions—ranging from Sakharov's widow, Yelena Bonner, who heads the Sakharov Foundation (which conducts research on human rights and scientific issues), to economist Grigory Yavlinsky, who heads the Economic and Political Center (which does economic research)—have taken a skeptical view of Gorbachev's foundation.

So too has the Russian press. Numerous stories have appeared asserting that Gorbachev only wished to upstage Yeltsin's recent U.S. visit and that the dollars raised would be soaked up by dried-out apparatchiki. Gorbachev no doubt is eager to bolster his 4,000-ruble-a-month pension (about $28 on the black market). His debut on the op-ed pages of the Western press and a cameo performance for Wim Wenders may not have helped his hard currency reserves much, but his recent Japanese tour brought him his first million dollars. Now it seems, thanks to Jim Garrison and friends, Gorbachev need not worry about a retirement dacha.

ANDREW MEIER is a free-lance journalist in San Francisco.

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Baltimore's failed enterprise.

TWILIGHT ZONE

By Jennifer Pitts

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

A decade ago enterprise zones were Jack Kemp's pet idea to revitalize the inner cities. Now everyone in politics is seizing upon them as a way to prevent another eruption like the one in Los Angeles last spring—and to turn blighted ghettos into commercial hubs. George Bush recently declared that enterprise zones "really would have helped avoid some of the crisis in the cities." Bill Clinton too says he supports them. A compromise version of Bush's plan, which recently passed in the House as part of the urban aid bill, allocates $2.5 billion in federal funds for establishing fifty zones, half urban and half rural. Democrats on the Senate Finance Committee have proposed to more than double zone funding, to $5.5 billion. The bill awaits action by the Senate.

Unfortunately, a city like Baltimore suggests that none of this will work. Ten years ago Maryland became one of the first of thirty-seven states to try the idea, with the city and state giving substantial property- and income-tax breaks to businesses inside its zones. Park Circle, a forty-nine-acre industrial park long touted as one of the most successful enterprise zones in the country, opened in Baltimore in 1982. Ronald Reagan visited that year. HUD Secretary Jack Kemp followed in 1989. But after a decade the zone has had no tangible effect on the neighborhood.

Dilapidated brick row houses, many with broken windows and covered with graffiti, line the streets of the Park Heights neighborhood in northwest Baltimore. A few blocks away, along Druid Park Drive, several dozen Park Circle businesses are set behind high chain-link fences and vast parking lots. Parks Sausage, the country's largest minority-owned meat processor, moved here in 1990, a prize catch for Park Circle. But though the business flourishes in its new spot, the neighborhood hasn't reaped any of the benefits, and the plant has hired few residents.

The idea behind enterprise zones is that tax breaks draw businesses to areas that they wouldn't otherwise touch. A new business in Park Circle pays only 20 percent of its property taxes for the first five years, then 10 percent more for each following year; after a decade it starts paying the full rate. The income tax break varies from $500 for anyone hired (including rehired layoffs) to $3,000 over three years for new disadvantaged workers. But most of the business owners I spoke with said the tax cuts were incidental to their decision to move to Park Circle. They chose the area because of low rents and its proximity to downtown Baltimore. Steve Wasserman, president of Cindarn Plastics, moved his manufacturing company to Park Circle in 1979, before tax incentives were in effect. He says that emotional ties to the city, not the tax breaks, keep him there. And he remains despite better deals that enterprise zones in other states have offered him. Parks Sausage says that it saved about $200,000 in taxes last year but moved to Park Circle only when Baltimore displaced it from its downtown site, now a parking lot for the new Camden Yards baseball stadium.

Proponents of federal enterprise zones reject state zones as poor prototypes. They argue that federal incentives would be stronger than state and local ones, since federal taxes make up a greater portion of a business's bills than state taxes. (Maryland's corporate income tax is 7 percent; the federal tax goes up to 34 percent.) But business owners say that proximity to workers and markets outweighs even federal taxes, which average only 2.3 percent of total costs, in their decisions about where to locate. And the added costs of settling in a neglected area often offset other incentives. "The benefits to us were and continue to be negligible," says Wasserman. His insurance rates rose because Park Heights residents dump trash in his parking lot. Bruce McEntee, whose Sun Papers recently opened a distribution center in the zone (to be near subscribers), says the company endured repeated break-ins to its construction trailer and had to buy an expensive high-tech security system for the new building.

Employers in the zone seem equally unpersuaded about the advantages of hiring local workers. Few zone employees live in the area. Although job creation is the goal of enterprise zones, a 1989 General Accounting Office study of Maryland's zones concluded that the state's modest job gains during the years studied "could not be attributed to the enterprise zone program."

The firms located in Park Circle's "small-business incubator," run by a corporation that rents space and offers administrative aid to small companies, can't employ many local residents. Most of the larger companies brought their employees with them from other parts of Baltimore. "What needs to happen," says Salima Siler Marriott, who chairs the board that oversees the incubator, "is either substantial expansion of businesses in the zone or relocation from another state, so that businesses don't bring all of their employees with them." Her argument points to an important flaw in federal enterprise zone legislation: the program risks becoming a zero-sum game, in which zones around the country compete for the same businesses, at each other's expense.

Zone advocates argue that even if the zones don't create *new* jobs, at least tax breaks will encourage businesses to take on unskilled workers. But Park Circle firms told me that most of the area's residents don't even qualify for the most unskilled jobs. One Baltimore businessman told syndicated columnist Neal Peirce that he gave up efforts to hire local residents for a zone business when nineteen out of twenty applicants failed drug tests.

Enterprise zone proponents argue that merely the presence of viable businesses stabilizes depressed com-

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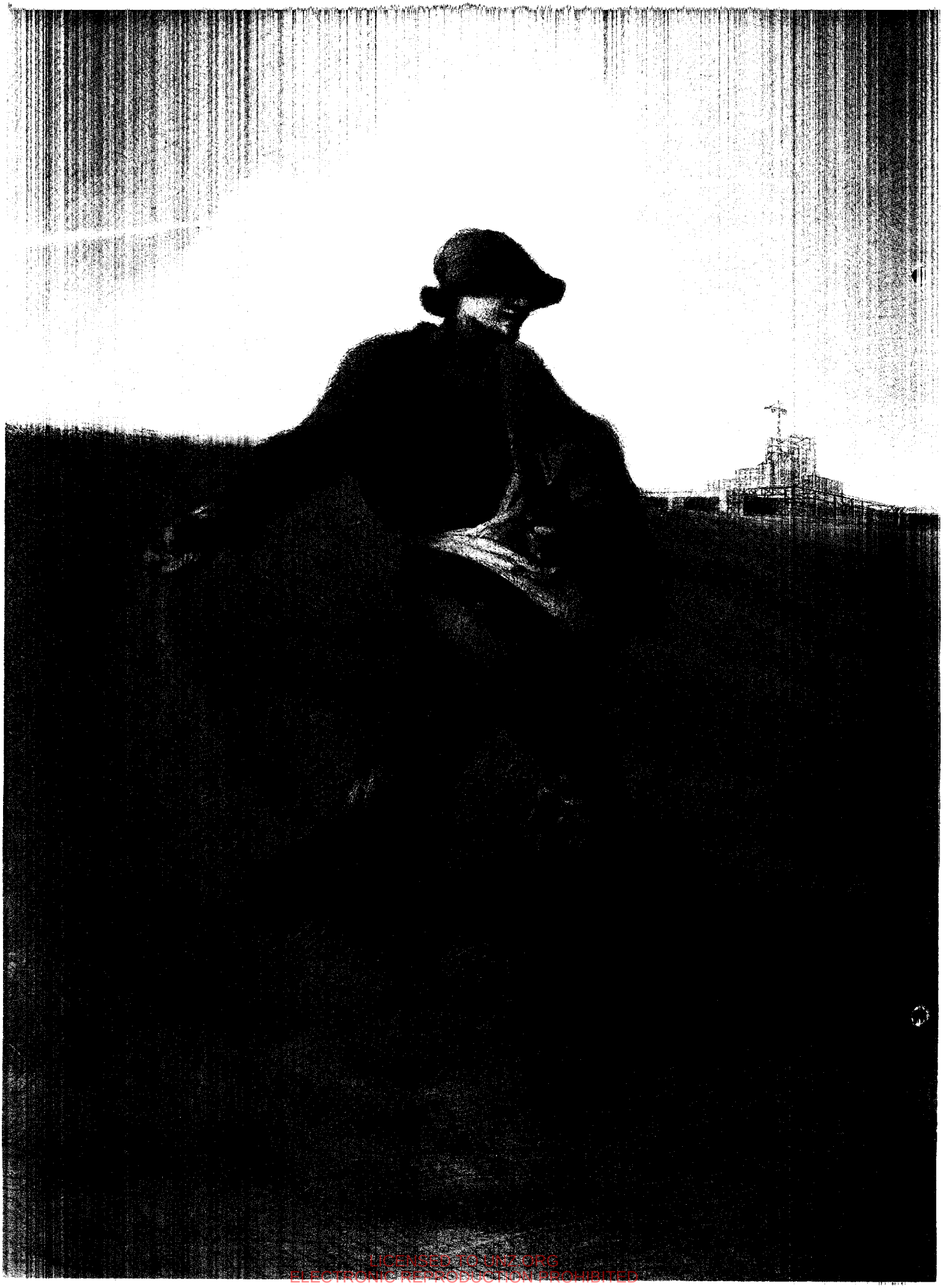

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munities. The Baltimore Development Corporation, the city bureau that administers enterprise zones, claims the zone has fostered "community pride." U.S. Representative Kweisi Mfume, who opened his district office in the enterprise zone as a show of support, says, "The area hasn't improved, but it has held its own." But Park Circle's psychological impact seems as slight as its economic one. Under Maryland's law a zone need not be located in a residential neighborhood. (Even under the federal rules, which would require an urban zone to have at least 20,000 residents, businesses could stay sequestered in one corner of a zone.) The companies, none of them retail stores, have virtually no contact with residents and no visible effect on the densely populated neighborhood they were brought in to support.

Wasserman believes the only benefit of the zone designation was increased attention from the city in the early '80s, when enterprise zones were Maryland's cause célèbre. When he moved to the area in 1979, he said, "We had shotgun hold-ups in the factories." Appeals to the city brought some streetlights and heightened attention from the police. "Now it's safer, cleaner." But Wasserman's recent complaints have been met with "a deaf ear" from the city. At the BDC the project seems to have lost favor as more glamorous programs like the baseball stadium and plans for a high-speed rail line to Washington have emerged. My questions to the BDC about enterprise zones were received coolly and answered on condition that I listened to an elaborate demonstration of Baltimore's "twenty-year plan."

Some zone proponents say Maryland has done it all wrong. "Tax incentives are irrelevant and infrastructure crucial," says Dick Cowden, director of the American Association for Enterprise Zones, a consulting firm. He envisages a federal program that would designate cities and states as federal zones only if they provided agreed-upon improvements such as infrastructure (plumbing, lighting, pavement) and law enforcement. But HUD officials argue that because they do not expect enterprise zones to heal all inner-city ills, the government need only provide the tax incentives while advocates separately pursue infrastructure improvements and job training.

Enterprise zones have proved most effective in focusing public and private attention on areas that need it most. Park Circle, however, suggests that enterprise zones in their current form may actually be more of a hindrance than a help. In fact, they may come to engender exactly the kind of false hope perpetrated by the social programs of the past so deplored by conservatives like Kemp. Enterprise zones can't address the deepest problems of the ghetto: welfare dependency, teenage pregnancy and broken families, drug addiction, crime, and men and women who are not only unemployed but also unemployable. At a time of meager federal funding and dwindling public patience, there is a danger that the idea will come to be seen as a relatively painless panacea, allowing legislators and voters to continue without a real strategy for coping with the desolation of the inner cities. •

This is the way the cold war ends.

THE BUSH WHIMPER

By Sidney Blumenthal

Since 1968—that is, since the Republican presidential era began—the management of the permanent campaign has been the heart of GOP politics. Presidents come and go, but handlers remain. The continuity of personnel has been remarkable: from Roger Ailes, Richard Nixon's media adviser in 1968, to Roger Ailes, George Bush's adviser; from James Baker and Robert Teeter, who nearly brought Gerald Ford back from a thirty-three-point deficit, to today's Baker and Teeter, commanders of the Bush effort. In every cycle, as if in a natural turning of the seasons, new generations of operatives are trained and elevated: Lee Atwater, the Southern director for Ronald Reagan in 1984, became Bush's manager in 1988; then Mary Matalin, Atwater's deputy, became Bush's political director this year. Only Baker, the managerial messiah, is not permitted to progress. He must always be thrust back into his original slot.

The mastery of technique is the key to the kingdom—an assumption shared so generally within the Republican Party that there is no need to explain it. Yet the means of Bush's rise may now be perversely the means of his demise. Everything he turned on his hapless opponent in 1988 seems aimed strangely at himself. Bush, an extremely political animal, is behaving as if politics were a distasteful activity, something forced on him. Like Michael Dukakis, Bush assumes that the campaign will be conducted on his own terms once he begins it in earnest. He believes that the campaign won't really start until he says it has. Like Dukakis, he has a mechanical

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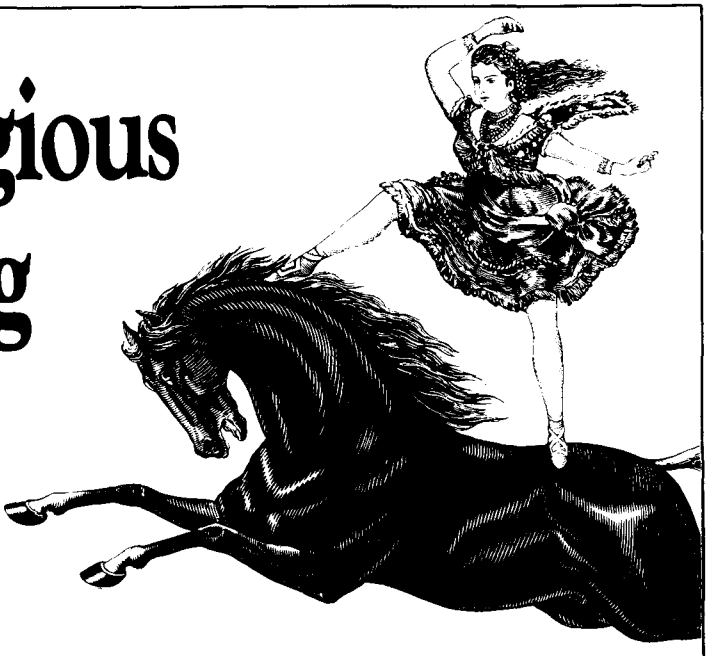
How to Be Religious Without Losing Your Mental Balance



The myth persists that religion is the preserve of the gullible, irrational, and fanatical. Yet, from Harvard to Berkeley, and among inquisitive people generally, there's an undeniable renewal of interest in traditional religion. This fascination is largely the result of the failure of secular substitutes for religion (such as positivism, hedonism, consumerism, technological utopianism, and Marxism) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: evil, goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of it all. Contrary to stereotypes, this religious renaissance does not imply an indifference to peace, justice, and human dignity; nor does it signify a hostility to science, only an appreciation of the limits of science and technology.

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conception of the campaign: it's not about ideology, it's about competence. Ideology is a contraption that can be riveted to the structure overnight. Every glitch therefore focuses attention on his internal campaign process, easily overwhelming the ever shifting lines of the day. Faced with these humiliations, Bush, like Dukakis, frequently displays the petulance of thwarted high-mindedness, but without Dukakis's high-mindedness. When he drags out the "L" word and claims that Clinton's health care plan has "the compassion of the KGB," Bush hits only dead keys. He is playing a badly warped piano in the attic.

At this convention, the once powerful gestures of the Republican permanent campaign juggernaut seem like the morbid symptoms of an old regime in crisis. "Death throes," mordantly remarked one influential Republican. "A leaky submarine," said a GOP consultant close to the campaign. In the march to Houston, each event conveyed the sinking feeling. "Pretty boys," sneered Senator Jake Garn about Bill Clinton and Al Gore. "Mr. Sellout America," charged White House press secretary Marlin Fitzwater about Gore. "Sniveling, hypocritical Democrats," shot Matalin. The words out of the mouths of Bush's surrogates conveyed hysteria rather than power. Party chairman Rich Bond then attacked Hillary Clinton, claimed that if Clinton won, Jane Fonda would sleep in the Lincoln Bedroom (to cut a deal for CNN?), and a state dinner would be held for Fidel Castro. The minicrisis over whether Dan Quayle would be kept on the ticket was really a shrouded discussion of the understudy who is now president. In the meantime, rumors of Bush's failing health filled the void of his leadership. The physical explanation was the most direct for what began to look like a political free-fall. One influential Republican politico, not in the campaign, surveyed the wreckage in the wake of Bush: "We need to put him out of our misery."

The Republican misery, however, is more than a function of George Bush's meager political talents. This election will be the first since 1936 (the year of Roosevelt's largest landslide) in which foreign policy is not salient. From the presidency of the supreme Allied commander, Dwight Eisenhower, to that of the young Navy pilot, George Bush, the defining figures of the cold war period have been rooted in the experience of World War II, from which much of cold war policy was adduced. The gap in age between Bush and his challenger—twenty-two years—is the greatest in presidential political history. Most importantly, the cold war electoral system has had its supports removed. The GOP formula for dominating this system required sustaining a deep sense of polarization within the country to combat the external menace. Nixon, founding father of the Republican era, rode to the White House in great part in the reaction to the rebellious generation born of the American Century. "Acid, amnesty, and abortion," the Nixonian slogan, overlapped with sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll.

In a polarized world, the worst danger to the country could come from the enemy within, witting or unwitting. The enemy within is treacherous, weakening moral fiber, precisely because of the enemy without. Toughness, Nixon's most treasured trait, worked most vividly against the global backdrop. The Republicans divided politics into a "mainstream" and a margin, and between patriots and un-Americans. In 1988, with the cold war's end still in question, Bush was able to fall back on the formula. Calling Dukakis "out of the mainstream" carried the connotation of suspect patriotism, reinforced by the Pledge of Allegiance issue. And being tough on communism and being tough on Willie Horton, pollster Teeter discovered, were mutually reinforcing. But the instant the geopolitical polarity evaporated, so did the domestic counterpart. The formula is exhausted, and Bush is left to run against Clinton and Gore as representatives of their generation—as it was twenty years ago.

George Bush, in fact, never anticipated that the cold war would end. What the self-conscious realist most disdained about Reagan was his utopian view that he was ending the conflict. When Bush at last acknowledged that Gorbachev was not Stalin, he sought to create the U.S.-Soviet condominium over global affairs that was Nixon's ultimate dream. His relationship with Gorbachev was cold war diplomacy in a different key.

For Bush, the Gulf war was a way to perpetuate the politics of the cold war, not redefine them. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, Bush's presidency was already in crisis. The economy had entered the recession—before the war, before the budget deal—and Bush had no policy for it. About three-quarters of the public felt that things were on the wrong track. Bush had enormous difficulty explaining his purpose against Saddam, importing World War II analogies wholesale in excessive flights of rhetoric. Because he said Saddam was "worse" than Hitler and Kuwait was Czechoslovakia, the ends he implied demanded at least the obliteration of Saddam—which, as Bush demonstrated, was never his goal. At home, meanwhile, he acted as though the war could sustain the GOP as the imperial party. He proclaimed that parades should be staged throughout the summer of 1991. His chief of staff, John Sununu, announced that as far as the White House was concerned Congress could go home for two years. The absence of policy was a function of triumphalism. Those who argued otherwise must be declinists.

Almost immediately after the big parades, in August 1991, the Russian coup took Bush by surprise, and suddenly his astronomical popularity began to nosedive. Triumph had made disillusionment safe. To speak of decline no longer might undermine resolve in the cold war. But there was also another historic pattern: in postwar periods the party that conducted the war is almost always repudiated—in 1920, after World War I, a Republican era in the White House began; in 1946, after V-J Day, Congress went Republican; in 1952, in reaction to the Korean War, Ike was elected; and in 1968, the modern GOP era began in reaction to the Vietnam War. Beyond Desert Storm, there was little to the Bush presidency but

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bathos. The crisis of confidence that was building before the war returned. Bush's story now solidified in the public mind in a way he didn't expect. His story was not the Stimsonian epic, but its rather pathetic conclusion—a story of the loss of purpose, not just of himself but also of his leadership class.

After the Russian coup, Bush did not prepare a program for his second term. Economic decline—reinforced by the lingering recession—was not on his mind. Instead he conceived a soothing campaign. "I've gotta get Teeter with you guys to tell you what we're learning," he told White House aides who were getting nervous about the disquieting signs. What Teeter was discovering was that as baby boomers were having families, they were concerned with "family values." The Republicans could win, it was surmised, by updating the 1950s, with Bush as "Father Knows Best"—benign, unintrusive, and wise. But as late as December 1991, with Pat Buchanan on the stump in New Hampshire, Bush had not begun his crusade for "family values."

Buchanan wounded Bush but was halted by his own limits. In his stead came a more potent Bush nemesis. Ross Perot emerged from that corner of Bush's mind that tells him he's a fraud. Bush had gone to Texas to be as successful as Perot, to get real and really rich, and to be accepted by the Perots of the new non-Connecticut world. It was men like Perot who goaded the convictionless Bush to become who he is today by his endless ingratiations. Bush, who is not known for hating people, despised Perot, a displacement perhaps of his own aspiration to assimilate with this kind. The part of him that was still Greenwich instinctively was repelled by the reptilian billionaire. But he also reminded Bush of his insubstantiality. What's more, Perot provided a kind of electoral convulsive therapy. He surrounded himself with the kitsch cultural emblems flourished by the Republicans since Nixon, depriving them of their exclusivity. Perot had shaken them loose from the cold war context. When he removed himself from the race, most of his supporters, having rejected Bush, could not bring themselves to return. Perot, whatever else, had legitimated the issue of decline and identified Bush as its spokesman.

Could it have been different? Bush might have used the liquid opportunities of the turn of the decade to reshape the moderate "Modern Republicanism" that his father, Senator Prescott Bush, had championed; to isolate the right wing, which the president, in private, loathes; to separate himself from the legacy of Reagan, of whom Bush was always privately critical, by cutting a budget deal that actually reduced the deficit. But in order to remake politics, Bush would have had to remake himself. The historic task with which he was presented required a consistent political character, something Bush had conceded long ago, the price he eagerly paid for his ascent to power.

And so he arrived in Houston, for a convention that was—at last—his own, but that was also a humiliating testimony to his own political decrepitude. The convention seemed to spin out of his control even before it began, though the fractionalization reflected Bush's fragmented character. Bush responded to the disintegration of the Reagan coalition he could not hold together by caving right without conviction, as he always has. He permitted the platform to be crafted by his far right political tormentors. It is a beautifully produced document, a cross between a corporate report and a college catalog, filled with pictures of Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. Its title, "The Vision Shared," suggests that Bush has had "the vision thing" all along and is belatedly bringing it to our attention. Yet almost every proposition printed on its glossy pages is stated in the most negative possible terms. To wit: "Elements within the media, the entertainment industry, academia, and the Democrat (sic) Party are waging a guerrilla war against American values. They deny personal responsibility, disparage traditional morality, denigrate religion, and promote hostility toward the family's way of life." And so on, page after page.

At the same time, Bush has begun to incant the word "change." Baker's farewell address at the State Department, where he talked about how the president would now "target America," serves as his Cliff's Notes. The platform preamble, pulled as an all-nighter by James Cicconi, a longtime Baker aide, and James Pinkerton, the New Paradigmer, is filled with references to "our new paradigm" and "profound change." But Bush's new approach didn't come from any intellectual process in which he had participated. It was a managerial decision imposed in desperation. Baker's and then Bush's lunge implicitly acknowledged what the president has not done. He is hastily contriving what ought to have been a deliberate, thoughtful approach from the beginning. Bush is advertising his squandering of years of opportunity. He may be creating only a further incitement.

The celebration at the GOP convention of the fall of communism was a celebration of the removal of the central organizing principle of their politics. The main speakers, led by the trouper Reagan, who always summoned the country through nostalgia, tried to revive the old polarizations through good feeling. Following Buchanan, who cried for a "religious war," a "cultural war," and finished with a dystopian vision of race war, Reagan seemed the jacuzzi after the cold shower. He had heard, he said, the Democrats claim "'we won the cold war'—and I couldn't help wondering, just who exactly do they mean by 'we?'" The patented Reagan method was to take the rusty edge off the Republican knife so that the thrusts would go in smoothly. And, in his warm, calming vibrato, he attempted the feat once again for his beleaguered number two.

The long twilight struggle has ended, but for the Republicans the twilight remains. The ancient dividing lines behind the negative campaign against Clinton are blurrier now than they were in 1988 because the world has irrevocably turned. "Four more years" echoes as a call to retain the dead hand of the past. The last phase of the end of the cold war in America may well be the toppling of George Bush. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Dog Days

The title above is too apt for Jack Nicholson's latest. In **Man Trouble** (20th Century Fox) he plays a trainer of attack dogs. It's a farce set in Hollywood and has to do with the well-worn subject of security in wealthy neighborhoods there. Ellen Barkin, ensconced in *luxe*, feels that she's in danger; this brings her and Nicholson together, which interests them more than it does us.

Barkin is becoming a sad case. She began promisingly with sensitive performances in *Diner* and *Tender Mercies*. Then she decided—or it was decided for her—to become a sex bomb. It hasn't worked; and this gimmick-as-career has only inhibited her quiet talent. Perhaps it's not too late for her to go back to acting.

This painfully laborious, mechanical bore is of note only as a comment on film friendship. The director is Bob Rafelson, who worked with Nicholson long before the latter became famous—on *Head* (1968). It was Rafelson who got Nicholson the part in *Easy Rider* that launched him and who directed *Five Easy Pieces*, which made Nicholson a star.

Carole Eastman, who wrote *Man Trouble*, wrote *Five Easy Pieces* (under a pen name). Nicholson also starred in Rafelson's *The King of Marvin Gardens* and *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, both of which were some years ago. Neither Rafelson nor Eastman has done much of note lately, while Nicholson has become a giant force in the film world. His appearance in this scrawny turkey can be seen as an act of loyalty to old friends.

So, if you want to pay tribute to that loyalty, buy a ticket to this film. But don't go in.

Another dreary film that raises one point of interest: **Unlawful Entry** (20th Century Fox) once more deals with security in the home, once more in L.A., though not at the luxury level of *Man Trouble*. Here the threat is a deranged cop, Ray Liotta; the couple on whom he intrudes are Kurt Russell and Madeline Stowe. The screenplay by Lewis Colick works up some banal visceral response, or would if the three leading actors were even minutely convincing and if the director, Jonathan Kaplan, hadn't coarsely traded on such tease stuff as superfluous shots of Stowe in a skimpy bathing suit.

The end is the usual fight to the finish between Liotta and Russell—in the latter's kitchen. Let's overlook the fact that Liotta swipes Russell in the forehead full strength with a frying pan and Russell just shakes his head a couple of times, then rises to fight on. Let's overlook, too, the antique trick of a seemingly dead man, at the end of a fight, getting up suddenly for one last scare. But let's not overlook the Frightened Female cliché.

Stowe sees her husband in a life-and-death struggle with Liotta (who has just tried to rape her). What does she do about this struggle? Does she pick up a pot and bop Liotta to help her husband in his fight with this mad killer-rapist? Does she stick a knife in the back of the wretch who is throttling her husband? No, she gives us pure D.W. Griffith, wringing her hands, pressing her palms against her cheeks in wide-eyed horror, then running off to lock herself safely in the bathroom.

Talk about the imposition of male stereotypes on women! Excepting the big female stars, who solved their own problems when they got into various kinds of trouble, the last ninety years of film have been laden with women behaving à la Stowe, helpless when they could be of help. Why don't feminists complain about this persistent primordial Lillian Gishing?

Applause Books has recently published *JFK* (593 pp., $18.95, paper). The first 185 pages are the screenplay, very heavily laced with citations from the Warren Commission report and other sources, intended to support statements and actions in the film. Most of the rest of the book is given to ninety-seven previously published commentaries on the film, many of them onslaughts, together (in several cases) with Oliver Stone's replies.

I had read a good deal of this material serially, so to speak, as it appeared in newspapers and magazines. I've re-read only bits. But the chance to see it all en bloc transforms a clutch of separate sorties into a continuous battle, with something like a roar arising from the pages.

The really odd fact about the uproar—apparent before but emphasized here—is that, in all these pieces, only Norman Mailer's article contains

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any extensive treatment of the film as film or of Stone as director. Obviously this book is intended as a polemical summary, not an aesthetic appraisal; still, the fact is odd. Either the writers don't mention the cinematic qualities at all, or they dismiss them out of hand, as if a picture that they think is politically askew could not possibly be good otherwise. But of course if it weren't powerful as a film, most of the objectors wouldn't have bothered to attack it as history. (Which of these writers bothered to attack the more recent *Ruby*?)

Beyond the cant phrase "the imagination of disaster" that floated through discussions of this film, beneath its own tendentious selection and arrangement of data to "prove" a case, *JFK* has, I think, touched a deep unease in many of us, a sense of estrangement from the best promises ever made in the founding of a nation, a clammy fear, unspecific but threatening. Part of the wide response to this film, I'd guess, has been inchoate, unrealized gratitude—that a film has at least and at last implied this unease. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

The War on the Arts

In a closely reasoned essay in the Arts and Leisure section of *The New York Times*, Edward Rothstein recently expressed his concern over the policies of the National Endowment for the Arts and his fears for the future of this increasingly compromised government agency. Rothstein, who is the chief music critic for the *Times* (and the former music critic of this magazine), argued that by succumbing to populist pressures and trying to represent every possible geographic, ethnic, racial, sexual, and aesthetic constituency, the Endowment is diluting its already pitifully thin resources. Noting the ongoing tension between "the elite character of the fine arts and the American traditions of egalitarianism," he called for a policy that was democratic in its inspiration but meritocratic in its tastes, at the same time acknowledging the unlikelihood of establishing such an "elitist" position in our fractured and fractious culture. His article climaxed with Tocqueville's famous prophecy regarding the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of supporting a serious culture in a democratic society.

Rothstein laments that the National Endowment, by following a pattern of representative (not fiscal) expansion that subordinates support for works of quality to majoritarian concerns, is helping to realize Tocqueville's Delphic fears about American culture, and he is right. It is a scandal that such regressive policies should be fostered in an agency originally established for the advancement of the arts. Still, the Endowment didn't initiate those policies, and for brief periods (most recently under the chairmanship of Frank Hodsell) it even tried to resist them. The NEA has simply surrendered to a variety of forces hostile to traditional ideas of culture, steamrolled into compliance by a massive anti-art juggernaut.

I use the military metaphors advisedly. Beginning in the Carter years, and intensifying during the Reagan and Bush administrations, a covert undeclared war was launched and waged against the high arts, with considerably more effectiveness than the wars on poverty or drugs. This action has culminated in a major retreat—in the surrender of most of the standards and the values that make a serious culture possible. I do not mean to suggest that inspired artists no longer function in America. But what was once a hospitable climate for their work has turned mean and indifferent. Native talent may be as abundant as ever, but never in recent years has it been so inadequately evaluated, published, produced, disseminated, and supported.

Although the ongoing war on the arts contains important economic components, related to the recession, its thrust has been mainly political. Anti-art forces advance by means of a three-pronged incursion—from the right, the left, and the center, all claiming endorsement from the majority. The assault from the right follows the battle plan of Jesse Helms and his minions of moral correctness. Conservative lawmakers, encouraged by the letter-writing brigades of the American Family Association, have concentrated on attacking and infiltrating the NEA. After the controversy over the Mapplethorpe and Serrano exhibits, and the subsequent cancellation of grants to Karen Finley, Tim Miller, and other controversial performance artists,

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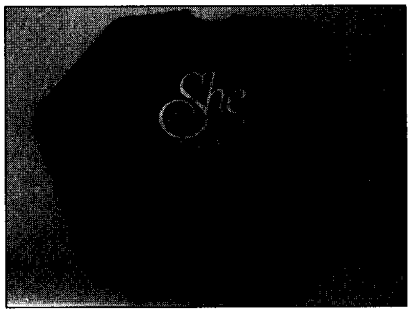

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the issue boiled down to whether the federal government should support any art offensive to taxpayers, with the rightist faction imposing content restrictions and many in the arts community shouting censorship.

The censorship charge was the most hotly disputed, even by those First Amendment champions, the press. Critics and journalists seemed unable to recognize that artists have as much right to free speech as they do, and that any threats to the privileges of one group ultimately threaten all. (National Public Radio reporter Cokie Roberts shocked the cultural community by suggesting it was time for the NEA to fold up its tent; just a few months later conservative legislators were trying to block federal funds to Public Broadcasting because of its "liberal" programming.) Even Rothstein was scornful of the "censorship" charge, arguing that the avant-garde, being just "another special interest group," couldn't claim its freedom of speech was being abolished "simply because the government declined to finance a particular product."

One must concede that some of these artists were purposely provocative, and had a political agenda. It is nevertheless the obligation of government to secure and to protect their political rights. Although open to debate, this is the view of most constitutional scholars, as well as of a Los Angeles federal judge who determined, in a class action suit filed by Bella Lewitzky, that the National Endowment had violated the Constitution in requiring grant recipients to sign an anti-obscenity pledge. The issue is not whether the government can refuse to fund "a particular product," but on what grounds the decision is made. Honorable people may question the artistry of the recipients, as Robert Hughes convincingly did in the case of Robert Mapplethorpe. But these panel-approved grants were overruled not because of artistic deficiencies, but because of blasphemous or erotic (more accurately, homoerotic) content. As Helms said of Mapplethorpe, "He was an acknowledged homosexual. He's dead now, but the homosexual theme runs throughout his work."

The NEA caved in to Helms's primitive moralism and other right-wing pressures in the early days of its former Chairman John Frohnmayer. Frohnmayer not only punished those institutions responsible for the Mapplethorpe and Serrano shows, but also canceled a grant for a New York art exhibit because he found *the brochure* too political. (It was critical of legislators like Helms.) Then an odd thing happened. As Frohnmayer matured in office, he was converted into a born-again civil libertarian, defending the rights of beleaguered artists so vigorously that President Bush, yielding to pressure from Patrick Buchanan, fired him.

Frohnmayer's successor, Acting Chairwoman Anne-Imelda Radice, has if anything proved even more responsive to right-wing pressures on the arts, in spite of peer panel revolts and protests from individual council members. Immediately after taking office, she withheld grants from two college art galleries for featuring shows with erotic content. Still, despite her need to placate the right, it is under Radice that populist policies have gained the greatest purchase at the Endowment. Not only has she announced that the agency will henceforth be more responsive to the will of the majority in handing out money, thus endowing the originally countermarket NEA with marketplace values, but she has made it official policy to fund every species of ethnic and racial expression, regardless of its intrinsic value as art. Rothstein quotes a brochure in which the Endowment proudly boasts that it has financially assisted "Hmong needlework, coastal sea-grass basketry, southeast Alaska native dance, American Indian basketry and woodcraft, Pacific Island canoe building, and Appalachian banjo playing." It's a start, but why leave out Yoknapatawpha County bear hunting, Venice Beach snorkeling, Hillbilly belly scratching, and White House stonewalling?

It is here, under the rubric of regional, sexual, racial, and ethnic pride, that we enter the thorny thickets of "multiculturalism" and "cultural diversity." For just as moral correctness provides ammunition against the arts for the militaristic right, so the war machine of the left is run by political correctness. In lockstep with the NEA's Expansion Arts programs, virtually every private funding agency—two or three notable foundations excepted—is now contributing the bulk of its grant money to multicultural expression, which is to say, to new and incremental programs based on sociological rather than artistic criteria.

Now, no sensible person denies that we live in a diverse society, that works of art can be created by people of every color and persuasion, that talented artists should be honored regardless of their origins, or that intercultural exchange remains a source of great artistic refreshment. Identifying and encouraging such talent is precisely what Martin Luther King meant when he said that people should be judged by the content of their character rather than the color of their skin. But he was talking about equality of opportunity, not equality of representation. And that is a particularly important distinction in the arts, which are responsive to what is rare and unique in human nature, not to what is demographic and statistical. Multicultural grantsmanship often helps deserving minority artists. Just as often, it represents social engineering transferred to theater, opera, fine arts, and dance, as a means of enforcing changes in the nature and the structure of artistic institutions. This is to be accomplished not simply by adding minority artists, which would be a highly welcome move, but by actively intervening in the programming process with the lever of restricted money for special projects rather than unrestricted operating funds.

It is a feeble and doomed attempt to force the arts, in the language of a recent granting agency report, to have "a profound impact on American society and the changes that are shaping it"—at the very moment that institutions are struggling simply to survive. What motivates this coercive philanthropy? As Mencken wrote, "Every third American devotes himself to improving and lifting up his fellow citizens, usually by force; the messianic delusion is our national disease." Trying to compensate for the failures of society in an area least qualified to be an avenue of social change, the multicultural ideologists threaten to sacrifice hard-won achievements for the sake of evangelical gestures.

Alas, they sometimes end up subsidizing separatism instead. The catchword "multiculturalism" these days is too often a euphemism for monoculturalism. As Arthur Schlesinger Jr. has observed, racial and ethnic pressure groups have a political agenda, fueled by the hunger for entitlement and empowerment and rationalized as a need to reinforce "self-esteem." But self-esteem is reached through achievement, not achievement through self-esteem; and self-esteem is certainly not attained by withdrawing into tribalist enclaves or centrist ideologies. What often occurs under the mantle of "cultural diversity" is less a widening than a narrowing of artistic possibility.

In short, certain forms of "cultural diversity" are rapidly proving as exclusionary as any system that preceded them. This is true of radical feminism, and especially of the Afrocentric movement, with its revisionist Egyptian mythology, paranoid anti-Semitism, and passion for self-segregation. Questions are being raised as to whether white people can understand works created by blacks, whether men can understand women's literature. Doubts are expressed over whether the art of Dead White European Males should interest women, whether the classics of Western culture can address the "experience" of black people. ("Why should they?" was

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the cogent reply of Irving Howe. "One reason for reading the classics is that they widen and deepen our experience, pulling us out of the all-too-visible limits that any single self is likely to have.") It has even been recently suggested that only black women possess the proper credentials to review plays or novels by black women. Pursue this argument to its logical conclusion and you end up in a kind of artistic and political narcissism according to which the only person truly qualified to evaluate an author's work is the author herself.

The final assault on the arts comes from the center, and is reflected in the way that middlebrow culture is currently being enshrined in the pantheon of artistic achievement. (At least two recent books, and a cover story in this magazine, have been devoted to exaggerating its importance.) Now, no sensible person resents the existence of middlebrow expression, or would begrudge its many readers and spectators the pleasures of relaxing entertainment. Such work tends to confirm people in what they already know, and not everyone needs to experience the rigors of serious art. On the other hand, those who proselytize for the middle always need to denigrate the high, like the bully on the beach kicking sand in the face of the ninety-eight-pound weakling with the glasses while calling him a snob (*vide* Tad Friend in TNR: "highbrow is ... a way of asserting cultural superiority over the less learned"). It's not enough for middlebrow stuff to top the best-seller lists or to dominate award ceremonies. It also has to be inducted into the canon of preferred art. The first draft (later revised) of a list of books that Harvard English majors were required to read included a lot of novels by popular or politically correct authors between 1920 and the present (Zora Neale Hurston, Lillian Hellman, Kate Chopin, Adrienne Rich, and Toni Morrison), but no Fitzgerald or Hemingway, no Styron or Bellow, no Roth, Malamud, Mailer, Pynchon, Gaddis, Heller, or Updike. The only protest (aside from my own) came from a colleague complaining about the omission of the Nigerian Wole Soyinka.

This downgrading of our major talents is an especially saddening development after the fifty-year efflorescence of high art in America, following Mencken's "revolt from the village" sallies against Babbittry and Boobocracy. It was a movement distinguished by hospitable small publishers, little magazines, avant-garde theaters, adventurous galleries, and listener-supported radio, where new tastes were developed and new talent was identified by such respected critics as Edmund Wilson, Lionel Trilling, Clement Greenberg, B.H. Haggin, Eric Bentley, Irving Howe, and Alfred Kazin. Now such criticism is largely left to the mass media, which arbitrates, thumbs up and down, literary and cultural approval. (The consumer's role is rather like that of Chekhov's Doctor Chebutykin, who gets all his information from newspapers.)

Intellectuals, many of whom left the little magazines to work in journalism, are often pressured to lower their standards in order to appeal to wider audiences, while the professoriat, having dried out its brains with arid critical theory, lacks the nerve to resist preposterous assaults on the "Eurocentric" tradition. (Interestingly, historians have proved much less intimidated than literary academics.) The intellectual class is discovering to its horror that educational standards are being set by TV and movies. Children learn about the Kennedy assassination from *JFK* and about American history from *Dances With Wolves*. As arts education disappears entirely from schools, rap and rock music are honored as mediums of serious social commentary. The trashing of the educational system is joined by the trashing of culture.

The debates of the '50s, between what Dwight Macdonald called "high cult" and "mid cult," would be impossible today. The once proud and arrogant

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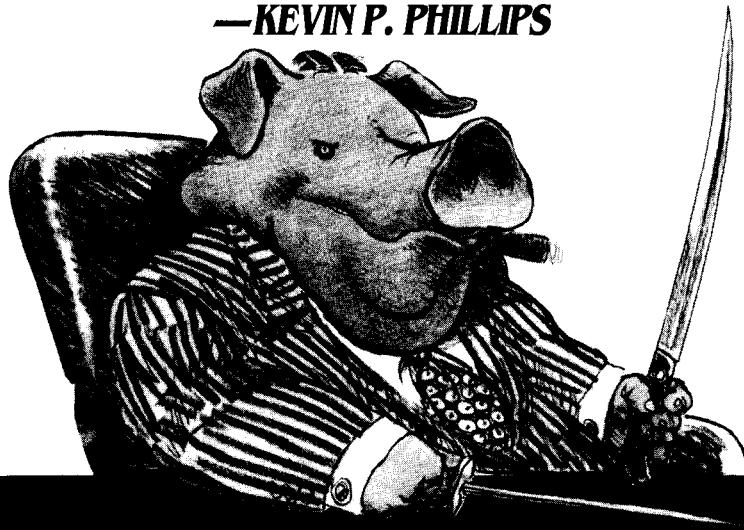

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highbrow has fled the field, pursued by a hail of arrows shaped as epithets. For the war on the arts is not only political but semantic. It proceeds in the manner of Orwell's "newspeak" by debasing language and redefining terms. Merely to use the word "quality" is to be branded a racist or sexist; standards are rejected as discriminatory; only those accepting relative values are certified to make judgments. Vilification replaces reasoned discourse, and the clash of ignorant armies drowns out debate. Most cunning of all is the way in which the word "elitist" has been manipulated to mean aristocratic or exclusionary when its etymology refers to leadership. Without an elite in the arts, we have no leaders, which is to say we have no vision, which is to say we have no arts.

The irony of all this is that, despite the way the arts have been systematically bullied and abused in recent years, despite the claims of right, left, and center to popular endorsement, a clear majority of Americans still believes in the importance of artistic expression. A recent Harris Poll suggests that most would be willing to pay an additional $15 of their own taxes (over their current 68 cents) to support federal arts funding; 75 percent are opposed to the government dictating what artists can create. Sixty-eight percent of Americans say they would miss the arts if they were no longer available in their community.

That is perhaps the most poignant statistic of all. For the channels that support serious advanced expression are quickly drying up. The big cultural dinosaurs will probably survive, and some theaters and dance companies may hang on if they fill their schedules with the equivalent of crowd-pleasing holiday shows like *A Christmas Carol* and *The Nutcracker*. But high art in America is dying, and dying along with it are our hopes for a still significant American civilization. •

Everybody invokes the '50s, but almost nobody gets the decade right.

The Best Years of Our Lives?

BY FRANK RICH

So far the only definitive poll of 1992 was the three-to-one landslide by which the romantic Elvis of the 1950s trounced the bloated Elvis of the 1970s for the honor of adorning a stamp. For all the jokes that surrounded that promotional stunt of the Postal Service, it was not an election to laugh away. Voter turnout was high, the consensus was broad. Americans seem intent on voting for the 1950s in a big way this year, and not merely in philatelic matters. In a country that feels disoriented and rudderless, the best future that can be instantly imagined is a rerun of the last happy days in our past, however cloudily and inaccurately recalled. And it is the '50s, and hardly the three discredited decades that followed, that must serve. For many, the '50s stand as the last idyllic American decade before the Kennedy assassinations and the Vietnam War splintered the nation, destroying its moral and economic self-confidence; as the last time that the whole populace could aspire to Graceland.

The power of nostalgic '50s iconography has not been lost on those who would be president. Ross Perot promised to return to the '50s when American business supremacy and know-how were unquestioned, to the decade that was synonymous with the once-invincible IBM and GM that hover about his résumé. When confronted with evidence of bitter social divisions in the real world of 1992, Perot had a vague '50s response ("Can't we just be nice?") right out of "Father Knows Best." His white shirts, square ties, and brush haircut were lifted right from the Norman Rockwell illustrations, the originals of all those *Saturday Evening Post* covers, that hang like trophies in his much-toured Dallas office. It must have been a cruel, if farcical, comedown for Perot's followers to learn that their hero's true antecedent of the '50s was, of all unwanted characters, Ralph Kramden, the self-absorbed, emotionally stunted, big-mouthed coward of "The Honeymooners" who was incapable of leading a bowling team, let alone a country.

Motor City
by Bill Morris
(Knopf, 337 pp., $21)

Home Fires: An Intimate Portrait of One Middle-Class Family in Postwar America
by Donald Katz
(HarperCollins, 619 pp., $25)

Young, White, and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties
by Wini Breines
(Beacon, 261 pp., $25)

New York in the 50's
by Dan Wakefield
(Houghton Mifflin/Seymour Lawrence, 355 pp., $24.95)

For his part, Bill Clinton has rejected the *Saturday Evening Post* version of the '50s, choosing instead to take the once rebellious but now thoroughly domesticated Elvis route into the decade's mythology. His television appearance with Arsenio Hall, in which he played the saxophone in shades, was a resurrection of hip as practiced by the white young of the '50s, even those who habituated segregated white country clubs. Like Elvis and the many teenage boys who mimicked him (and the many girls who cheered them on), Clinton hopes to prove that he is forward-thinking (but to an unthreatening degree) by emulating a mild approximation of a black cultural style. The White Negro for president!

And there are the '50s of George Bush and Dan Quayle. By turning "family values," especially those they consider "traditional," into a sort of loyalty test to separate the country's patriots from its infidels, the incumbent administration wishes to cast itself as the settled and omniscient parents of the postwar sitcoms, the Andersons or the Cleavers or the Nelsons. Bush and Quayle (and their wives) stand for the values cryogenically preserved in the perpetual black-and-white reruns on Nick at Nite, while the "cultural elite" push the career-minded single mother Murphy Brown.

In such a scheme, Clinton will not be allowed to pass as a stand-in for the

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postage-stamp Elvis, but will instead be vilified as a descendant of the reefer-smoking, condom-bearing juvenile delinquents of *West Side Story* and *Rebel Without a Cause* (it is a measure of the distance that we have traveled since the '50s that the letters "JD" now denote only a law degree); or, better still for Clinton's opponents, as a closet '60s radical. And though the Democratic candidate has sometimes seemed all too willing to fall into this trap, he has been saved so far by the inability of Bush and Quayle to play their own squeaky-clean '50s roles successfully.

Ronald Reagan was a masterly Ozzie Nelson (except that Ozzie Nelson seemed somewhat intelligent), but the high-strung, hyperventilating Bush keeps coming off as an easily bamboozled fussbudget, rather like the irascible and addled high school principal played by Gale Gordon on "Our Miss Brooks." Quayle seems less like the reassuring Ward Cleaver or even the rambunctious young Beaver Cleaver than like Wally Cleaver, the teasing older brother running on empty. (He will certainly try to paint Bill Clinton as Eddie Haskell.) And in the duel of '50s pop archetypes, Dan and Marilyn Quayle may have already lost the race against Al and Tipper Gore, who presented themselves on the convention podium as the kind of "popular" '50s couple who might have appeared on "American Bandstand," led the Pep Club, *and* gotten their homework in on time.

What no one much questions is the very premise that underlies this high-stakes political battle to take possession of the roseate '50s—namely, whether the contented '50s of traditional family values, Norman Rockwell homilies, and an innocent Elvis ever existed in the first place. What is missing from all these symbolic struggles is the rest of the history. For the '50s were decried, even at the time, as sterile, conformist, and materialistic by such sociological debunkers as David Riesman, William H. Whyte, Vance Packard, C. Wright Mills, and Lewis Mumford, not to mention writers as various as Grace Metalious and John Cheever. It was the heyday of "the men in the gray flannel suits, the country-club Christians, the organization men, the frightened herd that composed the lonely crowd," as Dan Wakefield summarizes the contemporaneous anti-'50s line in his memoir of New York in those years.

There is now a new and voluminous literature on the '50s, and it takes a decidedly darker view, arguing that the decade not only failed to offer a prescription for America's present ills but was in fact an early symptom of them. In this reading, the air-brushed vision of the decade that America would like to believe in today, and that its politicians would like to sell to voters, was as much a Fantasyland as the one that Walt Disney opened in Anaheim in 1955, its sitcom family values a sham and its industrial cunning tarnished or gone.

From *Populuxe* by Thomas Hine

Two of the season's better entertainments, Bill Morris's *Motor City* and Donald Katz's *Home Fires*, offer huge helpings of the darker '50s, as far removed from the sunny '50s as a paranoid '50s movie like *Rear Window* was removed from *The Parent Trap*. The books complement each other perfectly. Morris's book, a skillful first novel written like non-fiction, lays out the broad, public cultural-political highways of the decade. Katz's book, a non-fiction work written like a novel, takes the reader into the bosom of the supposedly loving homes that were supposedly brought closer together by the motor city products rolling off the assembly line.

Set mostly in Detroit in 1954, but with side trips to the other '50s centers of power in New York, Washington, and Hollywood, *Motor City* tells of the occasionally clever and often ruthless means by which some General Motors executives, stylists, and salesmen hope to make the new Buick Century, a fiftieth-anniversary model, the best-selling Buick of all time. From the opening chapter, in which the characters gather on New Year's Day to watch the Rose Bowl Parade on a new twenty-one-inch RCA color television, Morris evokes a glossy environment dominated by the family-oriented consumer goods that greeted the growing leisure class and its baby boom. The kitchens in *Motor City* are invariably stocked with products like the Power-Chef Mixer and the Hurri-Hot Electri-Cup ("It cost $14.95 and looked like some sort of stainless steel toadstool"). The "futuristic dream machines" that the Detroiters design and drive come in color combinations like "boiled shrimp and anthracite" and are equipped with "basketball-hoop-sized" steering wheels and seats "pleated with red vinyl, like the booths in diners and bowling-alley cocktail lounges."

Motor City amply demonstrates that the '50s were the first American decade that could be caricatured by the brand names of its material goods, and Morris recaptures the clean, voluptuous pleasure of it all. At times his book suggests, not necessarily pejoratively, that America had been freshly plastered over with that home-decorating miracle known as Con-Tact paper, the vinyl, self-adhering wall covering described by Thomas Hine a few years ago in his study of '50s consumer kitsch, *Populuxe*, as "a 1954 invention which resulted in an explosion of pattern all over the house ... [and which] sometimes proved addictive." After applying his figurative Con-Tact, however, Morris inevitably must strip it away to reveal what is hidden underneath.

In the *Ragtime* manner, he brings his fictional car people into contact with historical figures who set the true tempo (more ferocious than ragtime) of the age. The Buick division general manager Ted Mackey relentlessly pursues Marilyn Monroe to recruit her image ("a little bit dangerous, but not *too* dangerous") for the promotion of a new sports car called the Wildcat. Mackey has an extramarital affair with Claire Hathaway, a talented Buick stylist whose first lover (in the back seat of a Buick, no less) had been her favorite Cornell

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professor, Vladimir Nabokov. When, in a well-oiled publicity stunt for *Life* magazine, Buick sells its 500,000th car to a couple living in Levittown (on a highly photogenic block where all the other look-alike homes also have Buicks in their driveways), the driver delivering the vehicle is Neal Cassady, accompanied by Jack Kerouac. And on one road or another, *Motor City* contrives cameo appearances by Ray Kroc (soon to put the hamburger on the assembly line), Berry Gordy, Sonny Rollins, and Robert McNamara, along with the ineluctable Elvis.

By the novel's final chapters Morris has slammed his foot down on the gas, and the fictional-historical juxtapositions accelerate into ludicrous overkill. Before then they are often witty, but they do steer the book to a fixed polemical destination. Rather than using the real-life characters to imagine the '50s as they might have spontaneously occurred before they were calcified as The Fifties, Morris exploits the celebrities retrospectively, and on occasion mechanically, to buttress his bleak parallels with the 1990s.

It is no surprise to learn that Morris is a journalist—a columnist for the Greensboro (North Carolina) *News and Record*. And it is no wonder that his book's hero, to the extent it has one, is a fictional '50s Washington journalist named Morey Caan who works alongside Russell Baker, Drew Pearson, and Stewart Alsop. Morey is reporting the Buick story for *Life* when he is not collecting tidbits for a pet project, *Straight from the Horse's Mouth*, a book that will be "a series of direct quotations from Ike himself, verbatim gobbledygook, double-talk, and gibberish, an encyclopedia of Ike-speak."

As *Straight from the Horse's Mouth* might be considered the Ur-text of *Bushisms*, so most of the other stories Morey encounters during *Motor City* portray a '50s Republican Washington that, far from being paradise, is but an earlier incarnation of the capital of four decades later. Ike, who "had not attended church during his entire adult life," becomes a pious, regular churchgoer, lest anyone question that his family values are out of sync with Father Patrick Peyton's popular imperative that "the family who prays together stays together." But this platitudinous president's tireless pitch for the family—"Mamie and I both think they make a lovely couple," he says of the newly married DiMaggios at a press conference—proves a front for another, corrupt variety of paternalism: to him, the American public are children best kept in the dark about his big secrets. Morey stumbles on a rumor that Eisenhower "single-handedly starved a million German POWs to death during the occupation of '45" and uncovers clandestine administration and CIA schemes (some of them involving Howard Hunt) to pump up Saddam Hussein-like regimes in Guatemala, Thailand, and Vietnam.

To Morris, Detroit was no more of an industrial nirvana in its supposed golden age than it is now, but a twin image of the corruption, arrogance, and p.r. chicanery of Washington. It's no joke when Eisenhower's nominee for secretary of defense, former GM President Charles "Engine Charlie" Wilson, testifies before Congress that "what was good for the country was good for General Motors—and vice versa." When Mackey suspects his underlings of selling Buick design ideas to Plymouth, he starts a witch-hunt employing dirty tricks borrowed from Joe McCarthy. Though Buick is spewing out more cars than can possibly be sold for each instantly obsolescent model year, firsthand reports of a new, more efficient automobile industry culture in companies such as Nissan and Toyota in Japan are cavalierly ignored by Detroit magnates.

If the covert corporate and political cancers of the '50s of *Motor City* are familiar to citizens of the '90s, so are the racial divisions isolating Motor City from Motown. Except for "the first Negro ever hired as a stylist at General Motors" and a smattering of legendary musicians hovering on the fringes of show business, blacks are relegated to the unseen bowels of industry and the ghetto. (They aren't allowed to live in Levittown.) The as yet unknown Elvis, described by an onlooker as one of those "whites trying to look like the colored" and by Morris in Detroit-speak ("his hair was lovingly sculpted and watered and looked like polished metal"), is poised to make more money from black music than any black artist could imagine.

Yet the most rotten institution in the '50s, according to this book, was the most pervasive and celebrated one: the American family, that fount of Norman Rockwell tableaux and the touchstone for today's yearned-for traditional values. In Morris's account, the smiling '50s family, that alleged monument to togetherness, proves to be built largely on the subjugation and the suffering, even the incarceration, of women, who are trapped at home with their kids and appliances while their husbands race about in their new cars, often to toy with those deviant women still single.

As *Motor City* would have it, Nabokov's notion of *poshlost* (his term for "not only the obviously trashy, but also the falsely important, the falsely beautiful, the falsely clever and attractive") is synonymous with populuxe; and it is most perfectly illustrated by an advertisement in *Life* depicting "a gleeful mom and dad and their kiddies jumping for joy beside their shiny Tucker." That definition plays out in Morris's story, which reveals the *Life* family diorama as a nasty hoax. The newly affluent American men in this novel are not in love with their wives or kiddies but with their cars, which Detroit specifically designed to be "wildcats" catering to male fantasies of phallic aggression.

Sprouting buxom headlights and bumper guards up front and fins in the rear, '50s cars "looked like a chorus girl coming and a fighter plane going," wrote Hine in *Populuxe*. Women were stuck with station wagons—neutered, utilitarian extensions of the home, designed for the hauling of children and consumer goods. And the '50s home, as *Motor City* dramatizes, was often hell, a model of family values for display purposes only. Ted Mackey's wife, well-educated and long ago the author of one published story in *The New Yorker*, now languishes in an alcoholic fog in Grosse Pointe.

Claire, Ted's mistress, resembles his wife in so many ways that she might as well be a new model in the same product line. "I feel like a piece of property. Or a toy," she tells Ted after a confrontation that is reminiscent of Billy Wilder's bleak depiction of an ill-fated extramarital liaison in '50s corporate America in *The Apartment*; soon Claire will fly to New York for an illegal abortion (secured by Professor Nabokov). Even the one ostensibly happily married housewife in *Motor City*, the spouse of a likable Buick flack, feels "a kind of sadness without end, a feeling that ... all the striving and bloodshed, the accumulation of homes and gadgets and toys and babies, the sense that things would always keep getting better and better—all of it felt like a stupendous waste."

These fictional women's feelings are not ideological boilerplate exactly, but they do fit neatly into the mold of the grim, proliferating historical views of the '50s. In his important essay "Did Success Spoil the United States?" the late historian Warren Susman showed that Americans of the '50s were bombarded with family imagery, from "I Love Lucy" and "I Remember Mama" on television to "all the family words enveloping the new suburban lifestyle: family-sized carton, family room, family car, family film, fam-

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ily restaurant, family vacation." And yet, while "one can represent the new affluent society collectively in the image of the happy suburban home," the propaganda did not entirely take. Those suburban homes existed in an "age of anxiety" prompted by internal tensions as well as external fears of the cold war's nuclear arsenals. The happy family, praying together or not, was often elusive. Juvenile delinquency, once thought to be safely cordoned off in slums, was rapidly spreading "in the affluent suburbs, where everybody had a car and access to all the goods and services that money could buy."

In *Young, White, and Miserable*, Wini Breines, a feminist sociologist who grew up in the '50s, elucidates this anxiety, while making her own arguments that the "nostalgic and rosy" memory of the decade is a facade. "Innocent and white (and these descriptives are most definitely linked) teenage girls sipping Cokes at the soda shop after school evoke longing for supposedly simpler and happier times," she writes before dismantling this and other "Happy Days" clichés. Like Morris, Breines finds the decade's women trapped in a paradox: even as the expansion of higher education and the economy gave women greater social equality and more access to the job market, the "politically and culturally conservative" family values "socialized [them] to consider marriage as their only future" and barricaded them in their populuxe homes. Those values, eventually challenged in 1963 by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*, are, of course, the same ones Dan Quayle now trumpets so loudly.

Even in the '50s, however, those values were often considered suspect or irrelevant by the very women who were supposedly endorsing and abiding by them. Stephanie Coontz reports in *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (which will be published by Basic Books in October) that, for all the virginal and domesticated female role models proselytized by pop culture in the '50s, "teen birth rates soared, reaching highs that have not been equaled since," and that "there was an 80 percent increase in the number of out-of-wedlock babies placed for adoption between 1944 and 1955." The number of illegitimate births would have been higher still had not the ideal marriage age dropped to 21. As Elaine Tyler May, another scholar of the period, has explained, marriage was not necessarily a positive expression of love or family values in the '50s; it was also an expedient means of "containing" sex among the young. "Young people were not taught how to 'say no,'" writes Coontz. "They were simply handed wedding rings."

A significant number of those marriages fell apart a decade later. And even those that held together through the '50s hardly amounted to an endorsement of the traditional family values today's custodians of wholesomeness would have us believe they were. To Coontz, "The happy, homogenous families that we 'remember' from the 1950s were ... partly a result of the media's denial of diversity." Television families like the Nelsons were distinguished above all by a bland homogeneity (which even extended to the help, with the Hispanic gardener in "Father Knows Best" going by the name Frank Smith). The real story could be found in the discontented responses that Friedan received in 1957 when she surveyed fellow college classmates from the class of 1942. According to Coontz, there were other, empirical signs of the malaise:

> Tranquilizers were developed in the 1950s in response to a need that physicians explicitly saw as female. Virtually nonexistent in 1955, tranquilizer consumption reached 462,000 pounds in 1958 and soared to 1.15 million pounds merely a year later. Commentators noted a sharp increase in women's drinking during the

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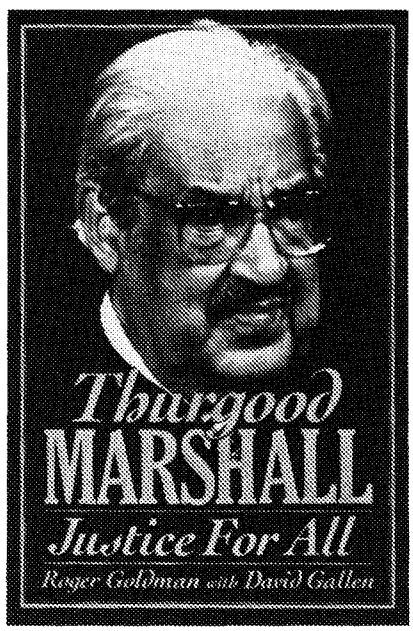

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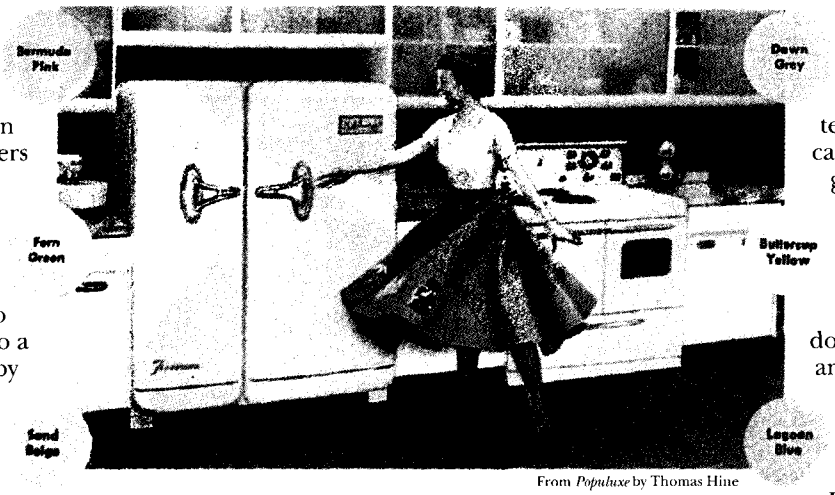
decade, even though many middle-class housewives kept their liquor stash hidden and thought no one knew that they needed a couple of drinks to face an evening of family "togetherness."

When, in 1956, *McCall's* published an article called "The Mother Who Ran Away," the magazine set a new record for readership. And by 1959, as Katz notes, *McCall's* had dropped its cover billing as "The Magazine of Togetherness," a popular slogan initiated only five years earlier.

Katz's book is the absorbing year-by-year journalistic account of forty-five years in the life of "one middle-class family in postwar America," but its real-life characters tow the dark '50s line as tightly as the fictional characters in *Motor City* do. Ted Mackey's wife and mistress would feel right at home in Katz's pages about the '50s, and so would Breines, who by age, background, birthplace, and temperament could have been one of the three daughters of Sam and Eve Gordon (né Goldenberg), the archetypal, upwardly mobile parents chronicled in *Home Fires*.



From *Populuxe* by Thomas Hine

The Gordons, who moved from the Bronx to a Long Island town close by Levittown after the war, were the precise consumers the Buick salesmen of Morris's novel wanted to reach. They watched "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet," "Make Room for Daddy," and "I Love Lucy," exulted in the new marriage of Debbie Reynolds and Eddie Fisher (who, as *McCall's* put it, seemed "like a family who lived down the block"), and took pride in their new family playroom. For the Gordons and their neighbors, writes Katz, "The nuclear family, calm and normal and having dinner together at home, was cast in bronze and fixed like some glorious hood ornament to the front of the national automobile." The average American adult of 1958 spent 62 percent of his or her time with spouse and family, a record high and "a tribute to the stunning success of 'togetherness,'" and this marital goal was mimicked by teens, of whom 57 percent subscribed to the new postwar social institution known as "going steady."

But the cracks in this picture of domestic bliss appear soon enough. Racked by a nameless anxiety and rage, Eve Gordon periodically took to smashing plates in her kitchen, and at one point, feeling that "she would surely suffocate if she didn't get out," she ran away from home. Her teenage daughters gradually acted out their own version of "The White Negro," escaping into black music, black men, and Greenwich Village. In the '60s and beyond, various Gordon children would embrace radical politics, hippiedom, drugs, free sex, divorce, homosexuality, and nearly every other unorthodox action that the traditional family values of their '50s parents were supposed to inoculate them against. A cynic might wonder if they would have led more conventional lives had their role models in childhood been drawn not from "Make Room for Daddy" but from "Beverly Hills 90210," if their parents had split up for keeps in the '50s rather than stuck it out with togetherness.

So much is going on, so much of it so ugly, in the seething '50s bared by Katz, Morris, and Breines that it is hard to square their accounts of the decade with the sentimental '50s of legend. But their versions do not seem quite like a historical correction, either. Their '50s are themselves so rigidly drawn that they seem almost a didactic response to the rigidly drawn '50s of the nostalgists. Is there, then, another '50s somewhere in the middle?

In his affable memoir, a sort of *Being Geniuses Together* for the young Morningside Heights literary crowd of the time, Dan Wakefield argues that the decade was neither "a time of quiet acquiescence to the status quo" nor a nightmare out of *The Bell Jar*, but a period of nascent, '60s-style change. Wakefield insists that his crowd was neither silent nor apathetic. Wakefield himself chronicled the poverty of Spanish Harlem as a journalist, enlisted in the activism of Michael Harrington and Dorothy Day, and had his firsthand innings with Mailer and Ginsberg and Podhoretz and James Baldwin.

But surely the hip, progressive '50s that Wakefield describes are anomalous, a college student's '50s—the years of a precocious urban college student whose circle included Max Frankel and Joan Didion and who regarded television as an "oddity, of little interest." That sort of '50s were available to young people like him who had escaped (or were about to escape) their families and had not yet contemplated their own marriages, which even in Wakefield's sophisticated Manhattan were considered "a necessary step leading to sexual intercourse."

Still, at least they were real, as Wakefield's memoir documents. It is impossible not to conclude that finally the halcyon '50s never existed, except as an illusion kept in place by segregation, by a consumer industry's unquestioned and often unscrupulous clout with the media and government, and, most of all, by the shackling of women by means of a theology of family values so rigid and so ubiquitous that even home bomb shelters were propagandistically presented as a nostalgic extension of Grandma's Pantry. The new, split-level, push-button home of convenience, which promised to liberate women from domestic drudgery, was another fraud. As Katz writes, the "typical" Long Island kitchen that served as the site of the Nixon-Khrushchev "kitchen debate" in 1959 was an unattainable, $250,000 "prototypical wonderland" that disingenuously announced to the world that robots "had 'freed' the American housewife as Lincoln had freed the slaves."

If a domestic utopia actually existed in the '50s, there would have been no reason to build Disneyland, whose huge (and enduring) popularity has less to do with its amusement park attractions than with its hermetically sealed evocation of a traditional, familial, trouble-free America unattainable beyond its gates. For Susman, Disneyland's Main Street USA is "the expression of the ideal vision of America . . . the mythic essence of what life was supposed to be like in the 1940s and 1950s." But this idealized America "was not what America had become by 1955 or 1960," anymore than it is what America is now.

Those who would re-create the '50s in the '90s can do so only brutally and dishonestly, that is, by bringing back the old arsenal of repression. Blacks must be kept segregated, as exemplified by

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George Bush's July 4 speech on behalf of "family values, what we call American traditional values" in the all-white town of Faith, North Carolina, this year. The "cultural elites" must be intimidated, perhaps by McCarthyite techniques, and give way to a neo-'50s pop culture in which gay men like Rock Hudson are eternally closeted with female role models like Doris Day in instructional entertainments like *Pillow Talk*. *Roe* v. *Wade* must be eroded so that early marriage, not abortion, can once again be the preferred means of dealing with unwanted teenage pregnancies. Government must get out of the way of big business, which can then pursue its selfish, environmentally hostile goals by old-fashioned dirty tricks and espionage. The president must once more be a wan father who knows best.

But easy as it is to decry and demolish the sentimental Bush-Quayle version of the '50s, it could be argued that the dark alternative version of the decade also begs the question of what most troubled America then and still troubles it now. In *Motor City* and the '50s pages of *Home Fires*, the frame of reference rarely widens beyond the white, miserable middle class. The poor, notably the black poor, can be found only in abstraction and in passing, often as either jazz musicians or soul singers who offer musical escape and titillating role models to young suburban rebels, much as they still do to Bill Clinton when he aspires to appear with Arsenio.

It is true that "Father Knows Best" and Norman Rockwell misrepresent the '50s as a fantasyland, but so do such cultural antidotes as the Motown catalog, *The Bell Jar*, *On the Road*, and *Howl*. Rosy or dark, in sum, neither of the ideologically opposed versions of the '50s puts faces on the underclass that couldn't go to Disneyland or work there, on black Americans who did not sign recording contracts, on women of any color whose hells could not be navigated by a broad-shouldered Buick. The unseen America that Wakefield saw (and had to move into the ghetto to see) would be called "the other America" by Michael Harrington in 1962. Left to fester, it exploded only a few years after that.

How much has changed? While the Clinton-Gore ticket does not regard that America as the enemy that the Republicans do, neither does it quite welcome it to the frontlines of a campaign pitched in its every word and deed to the middle class. As Bush-Quayle would like to take America back to a '50s where the poor are kept out of sight and women are kept at home, the far more enlightened Clinton-Gore version of the '50s still seems in its own way a little nostalgic for a classical American suburbia where "the other America" is still the other America, out of sight and sometimes out of mind.

It turns out, then, that the two warring versions of the '50s, idyllic and demonic, are both restricted neighborhoods of the middle class, each maintained by a different set of illusions. The real divisions of the '50s remain elsewhere, hidden in the shadows. And if they remain unaddressed in the '50s promised to us for the '90s, who can doubt that the '60s will once again be close behind? •

Sad, Sorry Critters

BY APRIL BERNARD

The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart: Poems for Men edited by Robert Bly, James Hillman, and Michael Meade

(HarperCollins, 192 pp., $25)

Men of Our Time: An Anthology of Male Poetry in Contemporary America edited by Fred Moramarco and Al Zolynas

(University of Georgia Press, 472 pp., $45, $19.95 paper)

It appears that we have reached a moment, a cultural moment, in which a men's movement anticipated by Monty Python's "I'm a Lumberjack and I'm OK" flourishes and it is possible to publish these anthologies with a straight face.

I was going to try to avoid generalizing, but God knows none of the editors of these projects has manifested the slightest squeamishness on that account. Robert Bly sweeps the broom with the fierceness of the zealot and the empire-builder that he has become: "When poetry is spoken ... people feel in company, in joy, in community, in an ascending energy spiral. Men particularly feel this." Further, expounding on the principle of "wildness" in poetry and in the men's movement, or "men's work," as he calls it: "One can keep one's job and still be wild; one can remain married and still be wild; one can live in cities and remain wild. What is needed is a soul discipline...." (The distinctive lilt of the American sales pitch is audible here, as in pushing a sports car: "Wild, yet safe. Unleashed, but not uncivilized....")

Bly and his co-editors James Hillman and Michael Meade wallow in doctrinal formulas. The book is structured as a sort of textbook; ideas and problems are laid out, then illustrated with appropriate texts for reading and study. In the section called "The Second Layer: Anger, Hatred, Outrage," for example, Meade explains:

> If the First Layer of human interaction is the common ground of manners ...; if the Third Layer is the area of deeply shared humanity ...; then the Second Layer is the territory of anger, hatred, wrath, rage, outrage, jealousy, envy, contempt, disgust, and acrimony.

Our readings to accompany this (oddly provisional) assertion include grumpy poems by Vallejo, Thoreau, Rilke, Creeley, Blake, Lawrence, and Frost. It is not clear exactly what we are to make of these unpleasant Second Layer feelings, but we are urged to acknowledge them, presumably because rage and envy are such well-kept secrets these days.

Often the poems are prefaced by helpful notes, e.g.: "The next three poems speak of a man who learns to love 'the guiding woman.' He cultivates the heart that way." "The Second Coming" gets this dash of typical Bly bonhomie: "Yeats says, 'Why deny it? Christ's dark brother is on the way.'" A poem by George Barker called "Sonnet to My Mother" is pre-explained: "We are but lame dogs and helpless chickens when in the energy field of so mountainous a mother as appears in this poem."

Some of the other groupings in the anthology include "War," "The House of Fathers and Titans," "The Naive Male,"

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"Earthly Love," "Making a Hole in Denial," and "Zaniness." Poets, mostly dead and mostly male, are ushered on and off the stage. Big favorites throughout are Yeats, Rilke, and Rumi, the last two in Bly's translations. David Ignatow, Galway Kinnell, Sharon Olds, Dylan Thomas, Kabir, Bob Dylan, and Robert Bly himself also stand out. (Dylan's lyrics, by the way, are agonizingly bad on the page.)

Just as a wily preacher can make the Bible say whatever he wants, this anthology plucks poems from our common library to prove the universality of designated emotions in the cosmos according to Bly. Thus Emily Dickinson's "I Felt a Funeral, In My Brain" is supposed to support Bly's assertion that "... Grief has been for thousands of years a masculine emotion.... Masculine sadness, then, is a holy thing." (As Dickinson herself observes: "And then a Plank in Reason, broke.") If we love a lot of these poems already, it's only natural that we might get a little second-layery (that is, pissed off) about their being collared and paraded around in this manner.

But when I say "we," I of course err. The book is not addressed to me; it is to be read in the tree house where no girls are allowed.

Women aren't supposed to get mad at the men's movement. We're supposed to understand; after all, we had our turn, and now it's theirs, or something like that. But feminism has arisen from a need for political, economic, and social parity. Concomitant with the denial of a woman's rights as a citizen has been the denial of her experiences and emotions, or the grotesque caricaturing thereof. While it would be unfair, of course, to fault men as a group for exploring their feelings, it could be argued that they have already done that, in what is loosely known as The History of Civilization.

And whatever the motives and the methods of others, in Bly's case the claim to embrace women, or feminism, is poppycock. His language betrays him. Admittedly, the prose often gets murky and contradictory, but some key phrases rise to the surface: "We are and always will be 'stuck' in Mother.... She is like a permanent stain." "Boys feel wild ... they all want to go down the river, with Huck, away from domesticating aunts." "The naive man often has difficulty in accepting the dark side of women, or the inelegant side of matter." Perhaps one of the most revealing passages occurs in Bly's essay for the section called "The Cultivated Heart," in which he describes the troubadour tradition and medieval chivalry, and also offers this astonishing historical precis:

> To judge by stories, reports, poems, and memoirs, a typical male act before the time of courtesy would have been this: a man on a horse—enjoying some wealth and privilege—riding through a farm valley sees a young woman gathering hay: he gets off and makes love to her and that's that. Then he gets on his horse and rides on.

This describes the situation about as well as if he had written, of another power relationship: "In the eighteenth century, many Africans journeyed by boat to work in the American colonies."

Men of Our Time is more of a yearbook than a textbook. It is an anthology of contemporary poetry by—and, we are given to understand by its editors, for—men. Many of the poets are relatively young and relatively unknown, and are no doubt grateful for whatever exposure to the reading public they can get. It's not their fault that they all get lumped together (the themes traced herein are "Boys Becoming Men," "Sons Seeing Fathers," "Sons and Their Mothers," "Fathers and Their Sons," "Fathers and Their Daughters," "Men and Women," "Brothers, Friends, Lovers, and Others," "Men at War," and "The Hearts of Men") and suffer as a result.

In their prefatory essay, the editors begin by explaining their dislike of modernism. Their laughably simplistic synopsis has Eliot saying that poetry should escape from emotion and Pound taking "refuge from the personal in a series of personae and a dense thicket of literary and scholarly allusion." Ever since, sort of, men have been struggling to break free, to go back to "reasserting the primary function of poetry as the most exact verbal expression of a personal inner world."

Curiously, they allege that "the personal introspective mode in American poetry comes mainly from Emily Dickinson and until recently was not widely extended to depictions of male experience." This is really bizarre. Dickinson was by most standards modern as all get-out; also she was not taken seriously enough to be influential until relatively recently; and furthermore, what about Emerson, the English Romantics, and Walt ("I lean and loaf") Whitman? Dickinson was indeed personal and introspective—but that is *not* (contrary to the misreading of Eliot and Pound) the least bit inconsistent with her denseness, thicketyness, and allusiveness.

Anyway, as the editors would say, buckers of the modernist trend like e.e. cummings (!), Theodore Roethke, Robert Lowell, and Allen Ginsberg paved the way for today's good stuff. "Throughout, we have preferred poems that speak directly, with a minimum of 'artifice.' We have avoided 'language' poems or neo-formalist poems that sacrifice emotional honesty for linguistic acrobatics." Note that they make no room in this wiggling for the possibility that a formally inventive poem might *not* sacrifice "emotional honesty" or that a poem might be very interesting indeed and yet have no relation to what is reductively meant here by "emotion" and "honesty." Be that as it may, they have defined their narrow taste; and if you stand in the bookstore and read their essay and buy the volume anyway, you have nobody to blame but yourself.

To judge from this book, the Man of Our Time is heterosexual, white, and under 50. He feared his father and loved his mother, but hated her too; he communicates imperfectly with his mate but had some great sex, once; he loves his kids in a helpless sort of way; he doesn't like religion, sports, or his body; and he writes lugubrious poems about all of the above. A sad, sorry critter is the Man of Our Time.

And so it feels rotten to criticize him, or his poems. He's so sincere and vulnerable. So let me hasten to add, truthfully, that many of the poems in the anthology contain wonderful passages and verbal felicities of the highest order, and that some weak ones are by poets whose work is often far more inventive and capacious. Some are terrific, unflattened even by this context: Jim Heynen's "Shall I Teach My Daughter to Fear the Ocean" manages a necessary skillful combination of verbal and emotional control; Stuart Dybek's "Brass Knuckles" adds to its superior workmanship a refreshingly acid tone; Robert Hass's ashen-voiced "A Story About the Body" and Robert Duncan's bloody "My Mother Would Be a Falconress" are in their very different ways tours de force, and not surprisingly also appear in the Bly anthology. Against all probability, Ed Ochester's "My Penis" is actually funny and charming.

Another generalization: the men's movement is not altogether comfortable with homosexuality. Neither volume is guilty of anything so obvious as the total exclusion of poems by homosexual men. But Meade, in the "Earthly Love" section of *The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart*, glides almost seamlessly over the issue: "Always a part of loving is an offering to Aphrodite and thereby to

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the earth. A man loves a woman, or loves a man, and part of that loving is not human. The loved one is connected to but not the same as the goddess." (Hold it! How exactly *did* that "loves a man" get wedged in there between the goddesses?) The book then prints a couple of non-graphic poems, without further comment. In *Men of Our Time*, out of 268 poems, I counted only three that explicitly addressed homosexual love—and of those, at least one, "Hot Summernight Cloudburst Rendezvous," by Antler, can be read as an unthreatening celebration of adolescent male "bonding."

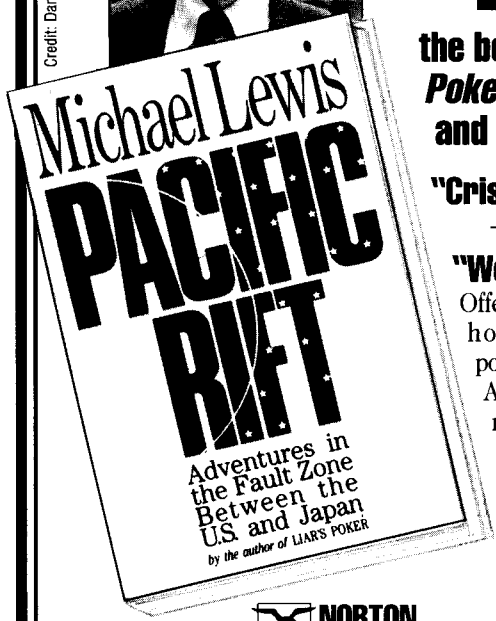
I wish it were not so predictable that writers of color are underrepresented, too. But without mandating affirmative action anthologies, it must be said that these books fail to admit their deep prejudices and limitations—that these are poems for only some men, by only some men, of our time. The responsibility to do so is baggage that comes with any project based on subject matter—which is also, surely, one of the least interesting ways to anthologize poetry.

One swell thing about the men's movement, at least as promulgated by Bly, is its emphasis on poetry being read and recited in public. But Bly makes it clear that he envisions the chanting of poetry around the fireside as an exclusively male activity—no doubt punctuated by mournful grunts of nostalgia for the patriarchy in its simpler forms.

Women have never lacked, however, for poems and tales to tell. The example of Scheherazade spinning stories long into the night takes on a particular clarity here; we must remember, after all, what fate awaited her if she ceased to speak. That urgency, that sense of writing and speaking under the gun, fueled many of those women's poetry anthologies published in the last two decades. There was also a need to assert separateness as a choice, after so many years of writing in the invisible ghetto where the literary establishment had settled women writers. But the prospect of reconciliation—an acknowledgment that after all women and men have more in common of literature and language than not—is vividly apparent in scores of anthologies, readings, and journals devoted to contemporary poetry. Meanwhile, the Girls Keep Out signboards scrawled by these books are the lamest on the block.

APRIL BERNARD's second book of poems, *Psalms*, will be published next year by W. W. Norton.

Credit: Daniel Deitch



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Eruptions

BY RICHARD JENKYNS

The Volcano Lover: A Romance by Susan Sontag

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 419 pp., $22)

Sir William Hamilton, the principal character of Susan Sontag's new novel, was what the eighteenth century called a virtuoso, a cultivated aristocrat with an amateur interest in art and science. As British ambassador to the court of Naples from 1764 to 1800, he became what passed for a vulcanologist, making more than twenty ascents of Vesuvius, and collected antiquities, especially Greek vases. His enduring fame, however, is as one of history's most notorious cuckolds.

Hamilton's second wife, Emma, of the humblest origins, was celebrated first as the great beauty of her day, then for her "Attitudes" tableaux, in which she posed in the roles of the heroines of classical myth. ("People are mad about her wonderful expression," Horace Walpole observed, "which I do not conceive, so few antique statues having any expression at all, nor being designed to have it.") But finally, and most lastingly, she was celebrated as Lord Nelson's mistress. Nor was Nelson the only spectacular visitor to Naples: Goethe passed through, and described his encounter with Emma in his *Italian Journey*, and a more exotic bird of passage was William Beckford, soon to be notorious for *Vathek*, a lurid tale of Oriental cruelty and sensuality, and later for creating a fabulous palace at Fonthill in Wiltshire, with a gothic tower nearly 300 feet high. It is quite a cast; and it is something of an achievement for Sontag to have made these people so dull.

The Volcano Lover is being launched with more than the usual fanfare of promotional trumpets, but the din cannot disguise that it is a big disappointment. What went wrong? A part of the answer, perhaps, is that Sontag seems to have had no clear notion of what sort of book this was to be. Maybe the idea was to produce a "baggy monster," to borrow Henry James's description of the Victorian novel, a treasure house sparkling with precious and fascinating objects. In a recent interview Sontag is quoted as saying that "it's a historical novel, but it's written from a modern point of view and it's a book that speaks in many voices.... The point is, I don't want just to write only a historical novel, but I do want it to be historical." Of course, many voices can make a rich and harmonious polyphony—or they can be babel. The fluctuation of tone in *The Volcano Lover* usually suggests not depth or complexity, but uncertainty and a lack of control. Perhaps the problem originated in Sontag's feeling that it would not be good enough to write only a historical novel. In any event, for most of the time her novel is more historical in its way than most historical novels. We are given a great deal of factual information. The tone is almost professional. What Sontag says of Hamilton could be applied to herself: "He wanted to make sure that their amusement was as saturated with knowledge as his own. Wherever he was, the Cavaliere was prone to cast himself in the role of guide or mentor."

Sometimes the little lectures are absurdly prosy:

> Then as now an ascent had several stages. The road, in our own century turned into a motorway, did not exist then. But there was already a trail on which one came about two-thirds of the way, as far as the natural trough between the central cone and Mount Somma.

And at moments the lecturer turns into the schoolmarm, with a priggish shaking of the head over Hamilton's political incorrectness, and a superiority too easily won. When Madame Vigée-Lebrun paints Emma, "Probably, he [Hamilton] did not give any thought to the fact that this would be the first portrait of her by one of the few professional painters who was a woman." Tsk, tsk.

Often the book reads more like a chronicle or a biography than a novel, and in fact Sontag has a considerable talent for descriptive narrative. Scenes such as the arrival of Nelson or the riot of the mob in the Neapolitan counter-revolution are excellently done. But there is no consistency of style or approach. Odd bits of the author's own stream of consciousness intrude for no discernable reason, and the characters reflect sometimes in an eighteenth-century manner, sometimes in a modern one. Thus, when Hamilton visits a fortuneteller, we have a naturalistic scene of Italian low life, when suddenly the fortuneteller is given magical powers and foresees tarmac, the disappearance of horse-drawn traffic, mass tourism, the century of the common man, and "even the American professor will be interested in me."

It is a serious weakness that Sontag shows little ability, with one minor but welcome exception, for creating character. She has one or two sporadic ideas about Hamilton—that he is an aristocratic cold fish, that he is an obsessive collector—but these are not developed or made to fit together into a coherent picture. And so there is a hole at the heart of the novel. Until a page from the end Hamilton is never named, but referred to as "the Cavaliere," even when we are seeing him through the eyes of his wife or his family. Emma, we are told, "was not born to that kind of snobbery which prides itself on an indirect expression," and it is a pity that Sontag could not learn from her. The tiresome mannerism of periphrasis, one of the many affectations with which the book is littered, is symptomatic: Sontag seems less interested in her characters than in striking attitudes toward them.

Emma must be a problem for a novelist, because her quality seems to be irrecoverable. One gets little sense of her beauty or her charm from the vapid portraits of her. Sontag depicts her as a sort of hearty barmaid, and perhaps that will do, more or less. But again there is infirmity of purpose. Sontag blunders in quoting from Emma's authentic letters. "Oh Charles on that day you allways smiled on me & staid at home & was kind to me & now I am so far away.... But I will not no I will not rage. If I was with you I wood murder you and myself boath." Suddenly Emma has become touchingly alive—and how painfully we feel the contrast when Sontag returns to the flatness of her own invention: "It is impossible to describe how much I miss you, Charles, wrote the girl. Impossible to describe how angry I am."

If Emma's magnetism is lost to us, the problem with Nelson is the reverse: we know too much about him. His fierce suppression of the revolution in Naples may well have been the darkest episode in his career. You may, if you choose, be repelled by him, but he undeniably had

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what now we call charisma and was then described simply as the Nelson touch. Not since Alexander the Great was there a commander in whom iron will was so bound up with the romance of personality; and on top of that, he was the greatest naval genius in history. What will not do, then, is to depict this astonishing figure as a pathetic little man, which is how Sontag depicts him. When Nelson enters Naples in triumph, the best that she can imagine is him wishing that his wife and father were there to see him. We may not know how it felt to be Nelson, but it surely cannot have been *that*. And she comments repeatedly on the grotesqueness of the love-making between Nelson and Emma, a small man with one arm and a large woman running to fat. This is merely vulgar, a failure of human understanding.

Great novelists can elevate the everyday—Austen can make a scene between a dull young man and a straight-laced young woman seem endlessly absorbing—but Sontag does the reverse. Given extraordinary people, she makes them commonplace. Goethe meets Lady Hamilton, and all he can manage is cocktail-party conversation. With Beckford, however, Sontag does better, inventing a platonic tendresse between him and Hamilton's first wife. This *amitié amoureuse* between a middle-aged woman and an insecure young homosexual is conventional enough, and it hardly does justice to a character of bizarre flamboyance, but at least it has some life to it.

A good deal of Sontag's prose is bad in a creative writing way. Consider this sentence, about Beckford's arrival in Naples: "A restless, abbreviated version of the Grand Tour (he left England only two months earlier) had brought him to its southernmost station with record speed, casting him on the shore of the Cavaliere's hospitality just in time for the hot wind, one of the great winds of southern Europe (mistral, Föhn, sirocco, tramontana) that are used, like the days leading up to menstruation, to explain restlessness, neurasthenia, emotional fragility: a collective PMS that comes on seasonally."

Or consider the ship *Colossus* "plodding nervily" across the Mediterranean. What motion is less like a ship's than plodding? And "nervily" is pseudo-picturesque and means nothing. The ship is then seen "clinging to the western ledge of Europe," a poor description of a passage up the flatlands of the French Atlantic coast, before running into "a merciless, protean storm." The first of these adjectives is lazily sentimental, the second shows that Sontag may not know what "protean" means. Throughout the book, with a grim sense of the inevitable, we discover that Vesuvius is to be loaded with a mass of labored symbolism—molten passions seething beneath the apparently hard surface, that sort of thing—and the less said of this the better. And there is plenty of cultural self-advertisement, too. Sontag lets us know that she knows about Heian Japan, say, or about opera—though any reader who can pick up the allusions does not need to be taken through the plot of *Don Giovanni* or—for seven pages!—of *Tosca*. (Scarpia is also introduced into the narrative of the novel itself, appearing as a fee-fi-fo-fum sadist who makes Puccini's own figure seem understated.)

Above all, the book is thick with authorial comment and portentous aphorism. At its worst, this is tastelessly facetious. Thus, on Pompeii and Herculaneum: "Like a more recent double urbanicide, one murdered city is much more famous worldwide than the other. (As one wag put it, Nagasaki had a bad press agent.)" Or there is word play so feeble that one marvels at the lack of self-criticism: "The sleep of reason engenders mothers." (No, it does not make much better sense in context.) More often banality is endlessly elaborated as though it were a dazzling new perception. So the obvious thought that when you are haggling you should not seem too keen is spun out into a whole slack paragraph:

> That tremor when you spot it. But you don't say anything. You don't want to make the present owner aware of its value to you; you don't want to drive the price up, or make him decide not to sell at all. So you keep cool, you examine something else, you move on or you go out, saying you'll be back. You perform a whole theater of being a little interested, but not immoderately; intrigued, yes, even tempted; but not seduced, bewitched. Not ready to pay even more than is being asked, because you must have it.

And so on and on.

Too often the Great Thoughts are simply wrong or silly. The collector's strategy, we are informed, "is one of passionate self-effacement. Don't look at me, says the collector. I'm nothing. Look at what I have. Isn't it, aren't they, beautiful." One has only to think of Getty or Thyssen or what S. N. Behrman called Duveen's "brisk trade in immortality" to see that this is nonsense. The lover, says Sontag, is the opposite of the collector: "The lover's relation to objects annihilates all but the world of the lovers. This world. My

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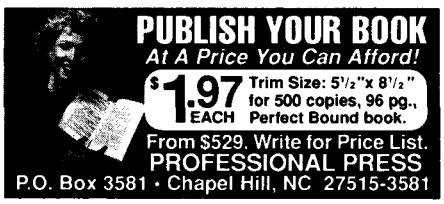
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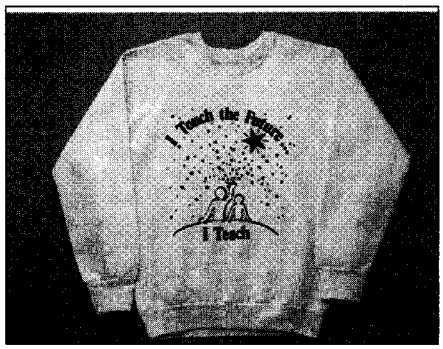

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Are they in the best interest of the United States?

Several months ago, there was much discussion whether loan guarantees in the amount of $10 billion should be granted to Israel for settlement of Soviet Jews. Because of disagreement on housing starts in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), it was decided to postpone the matter. Now, with a new government in Israel, understanding on this point has been reached and the loan guarantees have been granted. But still, we should ask ourselves: Are these loan guarantees good for the United States? Were we right in granting them?

What are the facts?

What is the purpose of the loan guarantees? For many years, it has been one of the major purposes of U.S. policy to persuade the former Soviet Union to allow free emigration of its citizens. Now that this lofty goal has finally been attained, the Jews of the country, its most endangered minority, have opted in large numbers to leave. A good number have chosen to come to the United States. The great majority have chosen Israel as their new homeland. So far, about 400,000 have come; a total of 1 million to 1.5 million are expected over the next five years.

Israel has a population of 4 or 5 million. The expected immigration is equivalent to an increase of 50–75 million in the United States—more than the population of our three or four most populous states. These people arrive virtually penniless in Israel. All have to be fed, clothed, housed, educated, jobs have to be found, and infrastructure has to be created to accommodate this huge influx. The United States can take great pride in being an active participant in this humanitarian endeavor.

What will the loan guarantees cost the United States? Misinformation about the loan guarantees abounds. Israel gets *guarantees*—not loans or grants from the United States. It is equivalent to co-signing a note for a friend. No money will be transferred to Israel from the U.S. Treasury. There will be some "scoring." But the ultimate cost to the United States will be zero.

In its 40-year history, Israel has never defaulted on a loan. The credit guarantees will not increase the U.S. deficit, nor will they affect domestic programs in any way. The United States routinely grants such loan guarantees. Iraq was granted a $5 billion guarantee just a few months before the outbreak of the Gulf War; about $600 billion in domestic guarantees and direct loans are expected to be granted by the U.S. within the next five years.

"The loan guarantees will not cost us anything...they will be of great economic benefit to the United States."

What's in it for the United States? The loan guarantees are essentially a humanitarian undertaking. But there will be substantial tangible benefits for the United States. Economic activity in Israel, as a result of this immigration, is projected to cause a surge of $170 billion in imports over the next five years, at least $30 billion of which is projected to be purchased in the United States. In addition, the U.S. taxpayer will benefit to the tune of several billion dollars from the servicing of the debt, most of which will be placed with U.S. banks. About 70% of the approximately 250,000 housing units required to shelter the immigrants will be purchased in the United States, at a cost of not less than $5 billion. All of this will create tens of thousands of new U.S. jobs.

Israel's record as a major non-Nato ally is unique in a world of uncertainty and shifting alliances. Our national interest is served in strengthening this ally and in assisting it in the absorption of what may be as many as a million new immigrants. These immigrants will further strengthen the only democracy in the Middle East—politically, economically and militarily, and thus make even more valuable this outpost of Western civilization in an area in which the United States has such a vital stake. The United States can take great credit for the exodus of Jews from the former Soviet Union to Israel. We have assumed the moral obligation to see that migration succeed. The loan guarantees will not cost us anything; on the contrary, they will be of great economic benefit to the United States.

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world. My beauty, my glory, my fame." Again, this is deficient in emotional truth. Love has sometimes been called an *égoïsme à deux*, but Sontag makes it into an *égoïsme tout court*. Is being in love really a self-congratulatory narcissism of this kind?

Sontag's understanding of grief and bereavement is similarly skewed. Suppose, she says, that someone you love has died on the other side of the world. The fact that this person may have been dead for some months "makes a mockery of the finality of death. Death is reduced to news. And news is always a little unreal—which is why we can bear to take in so much of it." Think about it: your beloved is dead, far away; therefore you feel that death is mocked, not final. What person of decent feeling has ever reacted like that? In such passages especially, Sontag is much too busy being smart.

The last part of the novel turns in a new direction. Sontag abandons naturalism, and four women in succession address us from beyond the grave. This is a fully self-conscious scheme to shift the book into a different mode; and the offering of a new perspective, in a way involved, in a way detached, is attractive, though it might have been more successful if the preceding naturalistic tone had been maintained more steadily. In one instance the late shift works especially well. The second of these women is a character who has played little part in the story so far, Emma's mother, Mrs. Cadogan. She is Sontag's most successful creation. Sontag brings vividly to life the garrulous old lady, disillusioned but warmhearted, with a rough peasant wisdom. Mrs. Cadogan is an unpretending character, and for once Sontag can forget to be pretentious. Yet even here she lacks consistency of purpose: Emma's mother is made to use the rural eighteenth-century vernacular (a good piece of impersonation), but when Emma herself returns to the stage as the third of these voices from the dead, she speaks in the tone of a twentieth-century sensibility.

The last of these women is Eleonora Pimentel, poet and journalist, who was hanged for her part in the Neapolitan revolution. There are lots of executions and tortures in *The Volcano Lover*, too many, and rashly Sontag lets Eleonora offer us one more of these, telling us what it is like to be hanged in public: "Then it was my turn—and, yes, it was exactly as I had imagined it." Oh, like *that*, was it? This means, of course, only that Sontag has not been able to imagine it. Near the end, moreover, Eleonora turns to some pious feminist

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sentiments: "Sometimes I had to forget that I was a woman to accomplish the best of which I was capable. Or I would lie to myself about how complicated it is to be a woman. Thus do all women, including the author of this book." The idea that this revolutionary heroine, dying horribly for the sake of liberty, should spend some of her last words to us on the hardship of being Susan Sontag provides the book, in its final paragraph, with its most ripely comic moment.

Great novelists may be intolerable in their private lives, but in their work they show a certain reticence. Tolstoy was a raging egoist, but in his fiction he deferred to the autonomy of his creations. Sontag may be the soul of modesty in herself, but her literary persona is much too self-important. Her characters are squeezed out to make room for her own insistent voice. The novelist needs to know where he or she is, what ground he or she is standing upon, but this Sontag does not quite know. A failure of imaginative engagement with her story is suggested, for example, by the frequent slippage of tenses. One small example (italics added): "Catherine *does* not think he will ever become devout (and he *did* not)." Such things jar in the reading, not because they feel grammatically odd, but because the writer does not seem to have her feet planted firmly in either of her centuries.

It is interesting to compare *The Volcano Lover* with the triumph a few years ago of A.S. Byatt's *Possession*—both books have the subtitle "A Romance" and both measure a past era, in Byatt's case the Victorian age, against the values of today—and to wonder why the one novel should succeed so much better than the other. One answer is that Byatt plunges exuberantly into her chosen period with love and admiration, while Sontag rises superior to hers. Byatt is ready to learn; Sontag sets out to teach. She has Eleonora Pimentel conclude that the Hamiltons were worthless people, greatly pleased with themselves but devoid of originality, generosity, or convictions. "They thought they were civilized. They were despicable. Damn them all." These are the last words of the book. Perhaps we should not assume that Eleonora's sweeping contempt is the author's own, but it does seem uncomfortably close. To be sure, a satirist may write a novel about worthless people (though it should not be necessary to explain that they are worthless), but Sontag has not written a satire.

Sontag reveals her attitude of lordly insouciance, in fact, right at the beginning of her book. There is more heavy symbolism. She depicts herself as lingering at the edge of a flea market, condescending to the vulgar populace ("Sloppy crowds. Vulpine, larking.") and wondering whether she will bother to enter:

> Why enter? Only to play. A game of recognitions. To know that, and to know how much it was, how much it ought to be, how much it will be. But perhaps not to bid, haggle, not to acquire. Just to look. Just to wander. I'm feeling lighthearted. I don't have anything in mind.

Nothing in mind—well, maybe not nothing, but the admission seems still too true.

RICHARD JENKYNS is the author most recently of *Dignity and Decadence: Victorian Art and the Classical Inheritance* (Harvard University Press).

My Name is Legion

Mark 5:1-20

He once lived among the tombs,
downwind of the city gates. By day
he circled the desert, at night he cried
out and cut himself with stones.
He had often been chained, but he tore
the irons and went shrieking back to the dead.

So we left him to live with the dead,
lying on shelves in their unsealed tombs.
Clothing he quickly tore,
running naked in the heat of the day,
muttering furiously to only the stones.
We grew used to curses cried

at early light, when dawn cried
wake to the city. He was dead
to us. Even the shaman's game-stones
said *His destiny lies in the tombs*.
Then came a day like any day,
after a sudden squall which tore

the sea, bringing a rabbi's boat. It tore
their nets as well, and while the men cried
to think of the lost catch, day
called the madman from his dead.
He stood groaning on the road to the tombs
hurling nests, branches and pointed stones.

What is your name? rang the stones
with the voice of the rabbi. The man tore
up a juniper, drew huge tombs
in the dust. *My name is Legion* he cried
for we are many. The demons' dead
voices, like a veil over midday,

begged for flesh to house them: for even a day
in the swine that grazed on the Stones
of Gadara. We saw the herd ourselves: dead
at the base of the cliffs. The madman tore
his face as they fell, but though he cried,
when we returned the man of the tombs

was dead and gone. Dressed and sane, he only tore
his day-lit eyes from the rabbi once. *Leave us* we cried,
and went back to mend the stones of our family tombs.

KRISTIN FOGDALL

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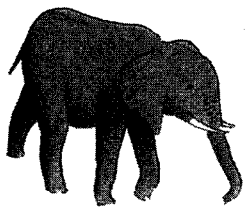
HOUSTON DIARIST

Sweet and sour

DUE TO AN AWKWARD DEADLINE, the Republican convention is only half over as I write. So there are necessarily a few things you know that I don't. For example, you know that George Bush and Dan Quayle delivered acceptance speeches of such felicity of phrase, such cogency of analysis, such sweep of vision that by the time the stunned and happy delegates had dispersed from Houston to go back to their home states, the overnight opinion polls were already showing the massive swing that has wiped out Clinton's lead and produced the historic political turnaround that is now the talk of Washington, the nation, and the world. Or perhaps things haven't worked out quite that way. As I say, I have no way of knowing. All I am in a position to know at the moment is that as of Day Two of the big conclave, the electoral prospects of the Grand Old Party were looking distinctly iffy.

THE PROBLEM, OR ONE OF THEM, IS that into the howling vacuum where the Bush record and the Bush philosophy ought to be has rushed the crazed political theology of the far right. The 1992 Republican platform reads like a collection of articles from *Human Events*, which means that while it is somewhat more clearly written than most such documents, its content is fully intelligible only to the faithful. "This," goes a typical passage, referring to the Democrats' deliberate plot to destroy the American family, "is the ultimate agenda of contemporary socialism under all its masks: to liberate youth from traditional family values by replacing family functions with bureaucratic social services." One sees what they're getting at, but the murky, paranoid, know-it-all ideology is as thick as in any Trotskyite tract.

UNDILUTED RIGHT-WINGERY OF A simpler sort was on tap at Monday's "Christian Coalition God and Country Rally" at the Sheraton Astrodome Hotel, where I went for a look at one of the GOP's 1996 (or sooner) presidential possibilities, Dan Quayle. The Christian Coalition is Pat Robertson's political arm. While Quayle was speaking, Robertson aides were handing out copies of the Coalition's newspaper, which featured an article attacking the Rio environmental summit as a "giant step" in "the Establishment's strategy for a New World Order." This seemed impolite, in view of the fact that this same New World Order is the explicit goal of Quayle's boss. "The cultural elites laughed at my reference to Murphy Brown," Quayle told the cheering Christians. "It wasn't just me they were laughing at. It was you." Resentment and martyrdom ("I don't care what the elites say, I don't care what the critics say, I will never back down") were the vice president's themes. But Quayle was overshadowed at the rally, I thought, by a far more enduring figure: Pat Boone, the singer, who looked as spookily trim, unwrinkled, and brown-haired as he had back in the late '50s, when my sister and I, budding cultural elitists that we were, used to snicker at the moronic advice to teens contained in Boone's best-selling book of the time, *Twixt Twelve and Twenty*. The real business of the convention, Boone said by way of warming up the crowd, was "to re-elect by acclamation the living God as our guide and source of light." That should not be a problem, given the big Guy's low negatives in the polls.



THREE OF QUAYLE'S PROBABLE RIvals four years hence—Pat Buchanan, Jack Kemp, and Phil Gramm—gave speeches during the first two nights, in that order. If one were to draw a graph with these three names, again in that order, on the horizontal axis and human decency on the vertical, the result would look like Mt. Fuji. Kemp is a species of miracle I don't pretend to understand. How did a person of such obviously sincere concern and, more amazingly, respect for the poor and downtrodden manage to find his way into Bush's Cabinet and the hearts of Bush's delegates? It's a mystery, like Gorbachev and Yeltsin coming out of the Soviet Communist Party. Kemp's speech had not a trace of meanness or ugliness in it. He spoke of "those liberal democratic ideals which gave birth to our nation"—a daring turn of phrase in this crowd. And he finished by saying that "the message of Los Angeles" is that "we must be the party that gives everyone a stake in the system." His solutions are simplistic and wrongheaded, I think, but I can't help feeling affection for him, and I would sooner entrust power to him than to many a Democrat.

BUCHANAN AND GRAMM, ON THE other hand ... Now there's a scary pair. Buchanan was the de facto keynoter of this convention, since his speech was the featured event of opening night's prime time, pushing Ronald Reagan into the Arsenio time slot. Buchanan, as sour as Kemp was sweet, lingered lovingly on his hates, which included Bill and (especially) Hillary Clinton, feminists, environmentalists, and of course gays and lesbians. Like Kemp, Buchanan built his peroration around the L.A. riots, but Buchanan drew a different lesson from that unhappy episode. With relish, he described how an Army unit faced down a mob that was about to torch an old folks' home, the only unburned unlooted building on "a dark street." The mob retreated when "it met the one thing that could stop it: force, rooted in justice, backed by courage." Buchanan concluded with this sentence: "As those boys took back the streets of Los Angeles, block by block, so we must take back our cities, and take back our culture, and take back our country." There you have it: the vision thing. For Buchanan, the perfect metaphor for the political task facing his party and his country is militarized race war.

SENATOR GRAMM, THE NOMINAL keynoter, gave a performance of unremitting negativity that was politically inept to boot. Keynote speeches traditionally incorporate a call-and-response gimmick. Gramm's was to describe, in his grating, contempt-laden voice, some proposed Clinton atrocity ("a new domestic spending spree," say), to ask theatrically, "Is that the change we want?," and thus to elicit a hearty "NO-O-O!" from the delegates. This was supremely dumb, because the one thing opinion polls have irrefutably established is that the public wants, precisely, change. All Gramm accomplished was to have the Republican Party, in convention assembled, repeatedly shout "No!" at the very mention of, precisely, change. Gramm also said that his test of any government program is to ask if it can pass muster with a Joe Sixpack type of his acquaintance, a "real honest-to-God working person" named Dicky Flatt. Dicky Flatt is apparently a staple of Gramm's speeches. Unfortunately, the name Dicky Flatt sounded to many of us, sitting in the cultural elitist section, like a coy slang term for penile flaccidity. "Bill Clinton," Gramm concluded this section of his speech portentously, "does not know Dicky Flatt." No, that's one thing Clinton has never been accused of. But neither does Bill Clinton know fear of Republicans, which is why Phil Gramm, if he gets his party's nomination in 1996, is likely to have to face a Democratic incumbent.

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